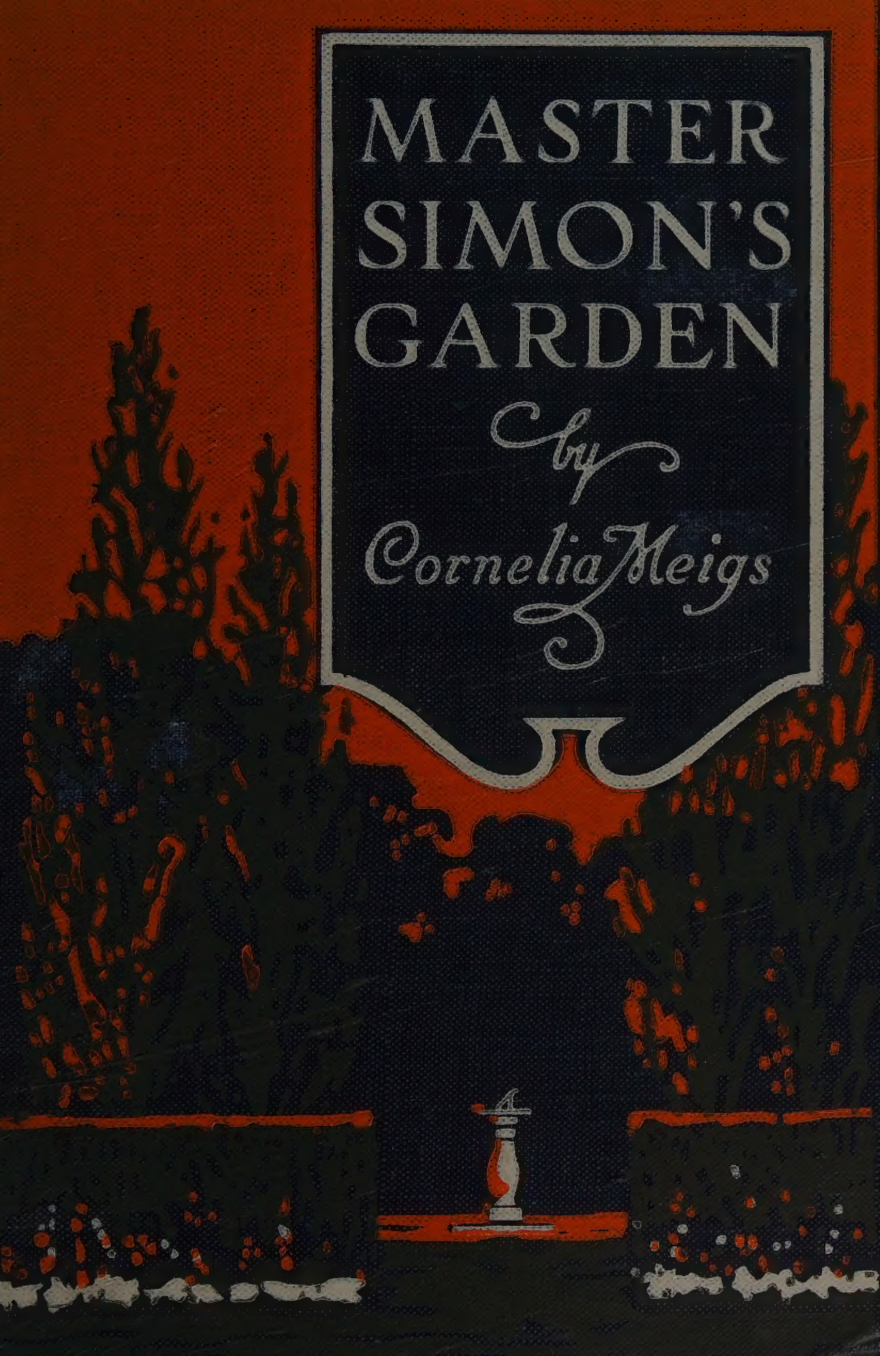
MASTER SIMON'S GARDEN

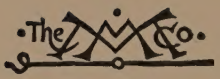
by

Cornelia Meigs



Jane Burgess · April 1926
Wellesley - another "measles"
book.

MASTER SIMON'S GARDEN



THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
NEW YORK · BOSTON · CHICAGO · DALLAS
ATLANTA · SAN FRANCISCO

MACMILLAN & CO., LIMITED
LONDON · BOMBAY · CALCUTTA
MELBOURNE

THE MACMILLAN CO. OF CANADA, LTD.
TORONTO

MARGARET LOVED THEM TOO.

MASTER SIMON'S GARDEN

A STORY

BY

CORNELIA MEIGS

Author of "The Kingdom of the Winding Road," "The Steadfast Princess," etc.

ILLUSTRATED

New York

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1924

All rights reserved

COPYRIGHT, 1916,
BY THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

Set up and electrotyped. Published, October, 1916.

CONTENTS

PART I

MARGERET

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	The Edge of the World	3
II	Master Simon's Pilgrimage	19
III	Roofs of Gold	34
IV	The Gospel of Fear	50
V	By Candlelight	64
VI	The Schoolhouse Lane	80
VII	Goody Parsons on Guard	97

PART II

STEPHEN

VIII	A Tale of Witches	113
IX	King James' Tree	129
X	"Ships of Adventure"	144
XI	Fair Maids of France	159
XII	The Breaking of the Storm	178
XIII	Lighting the Firebrand	190
XIV	Cousin Betsey Anne	205
XV	A Message from Master Simon	222
XVI	The Hand on the Latch	239
XVII	Prisoner of War	252
XVIII	Quaker Ladies	267
XIX	Goody Parsons' Rose	286
XX	The Sea-Road to Cathay	302
	Conclusion	317

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Margaret loved them too . . . . . *Frontispiece*

FACING PAGE

"You shall not cut down our tree" 136

He drew his shining sword and held it up 194

"Why are you not watching, Mother?" 312

PART I
MARGERET

MASTER SIMON'S GARDEN

CHAPTER I

THE EDGE OF THE WORLD

OLD Goody Parsons, with her cleanest white kerchief, her most sorrowful expression of face and her biggest brown basket, had gone down through the village and across the hill to tell Master Simon what a long, hard winter it had been and how her cupboard was as bare, indeed, as Mother Hubbard's own. Now, as she made her way up the stony path again, her wrinkled old face was wreathed in smiles and her burden sagged heavily from her arm, for once more it had been proved that no one who came hungry to Master Simon's door ever went away unsatisfied. He had piled her basket high with good things from his garden, his wife had added three loaves of freshly baked bread and a jar of honey, and his little daughter Margeret had walked part of the way up the hill to help the old woman on her homeward road.

"Good-bye to you, little Mistress," Goody Parsons called after her when they parted at last, "and may the blessings on your dear father and mother be as many as are the good gifts in my basket."

Margeret, since her father needed her, did not wait to reply, but scampered away down the path again. The old woman stood on the hill-crest looking down at the scattered houses of the little Puritan town, at the spreading, sloping meadows and the wide salt marshes growing yellow-green under the pleasant April sunshine.

"These hills and meadows will never look as fair to me as those of England," she sighed, "but after all it is a goodly land that we have come to. Even if there be hunger and cold and want in it, are there not also freedom and kindness and Master Simon?"

The little town of Hopewell had been established long enough to have passed by those first terrible years when suffering and starvation filled the New England Colonies. There were, however, many hard lessons to be learned before those who knew how to live and prosper in the Old World could master the arts necessary to the keeping of body and soul together in the New. Men who had tilled the rich smooth fields of England and had followed the plough down the furrows that their great-grandfathers had trod before them, must now break out new farm lands in those boulder-strewn meadows that sloped steeply down to the sea. Grievous work they surely found it, and small the returns for the first hard years. Yet, whenever food or fire or courage failed, the simplest remedy in the world for every trouble was to go in haste to Master Simon Radpath. His grassy meadow was always green, his fields rich every harvest time with bowing grain, his garden always crowded with herbs and veg-

etables, and gay the whole summer long with flowers, scarlet and white and yellow.

The old woman who had been his visitor to-day watched Margeret's yellow head disappear down the lane, and then turned to rest her basket on the rude stone wall, not because the burden was too heavy for her stout old arm, but because she heard footsteps behind her and she did dearly love to stop a neighbour on the road for a bit of talk.

"Good morrow, friend," she cried out, almost before she saw to whom she was speaking.

Her face fell a little when she discovered that it was only Samuel Skerry, the little crooked-backed shoemaker who lived with his apprentice in a tiny cottage, one field away from Master Simon's garden. A scowling, morose fellow the shoemaker was, but Goody Parsons' eager tongue could never be stopped by that.

"Spring is surely coming at last, neighbour," she began, quite undisturbed by Skerry's sullen greeting. "Here is another winter gone where it can trouble old bones no longer."

"Spring indeed," snarled the shoemaker, in his harsh voice, "why, the wind is cold as January and every key-hole in my house was shrieking aloud all last night! Where see you any Spring?"

"I have been, but now, to visit Master and Mistress Radpath," she returned, "and their garden is already green, with a whole row of golden daffodils nodding before the door."

"Ah," answered her companion, "trust Master Simon to have some foolish, useless blossoms in his garden the moment the sun peeps out of the winter

clouds. Does he never remember that so much time spent on what is only bright and gaudy is not strictly in accord with our Puritan law?"

"It was with herbs from that same garden that he healed you and many of the rest of us during that dreadful season of sickness," retorted Goody Parsons, "and did you not lie ill for two months of that summer and yet have a better harvest than any year before, because he had tended your fields along with his own?"

"Ay, and preached to me afterwards about every nettle and bramble that he found there, as though each had been one of the seven deadly sins. No, no, I like not his ways and I am weary of all this talk of how great and good a man is Master Simon. I fear me that all is not well in that bright-flowering garden of his." The shoemaker nodded craftily, as though he knew much that he would not tell.

Goody Parsons edged nearer. She was grateful to that gentle-voiced, kind-faced Master Simon who had helped her so often in trouble; she loved him much but, alas, she loved gossip more.

"Tell me what they say, good neighbour," she coaxed.

Samuel Skerry was provokingly silent for a space.

"They say," he said at last, "that in that garden — beyond the tulip bed — behind the hedge — "

"Yes, yes!" she gasped as he paused again.

"There is Something hid," he concluded — "Something that no one of us ever sees but that neighbours hear, sometimes, crying aloud."

"But what is it?" she begged to know, in an agony of curiosity.

"Hush, I will whisper in your ear," he said. "It were not meet to speak such a thing aloud."

Goody Parsons bent her grey head to listen, and started back at the shoemaker's low-spoken words.

"Ah, surely that can not be true of so good a Puritan!" she cried in horror.

"You may believe me or not, according to your will," returned the shoemaker testily. "You were there but now; did you hear naught?"

Loyalty to her dear Master Simon and love of giving information struggled for a moment in the Goody's withered face, but at last the words simply burst from her.

"I did hear a strange cry," she said. "Ah, woe is me to think ill of so good a man! Come with me toward my house, Neighbour Skerry, and I will tell you what the sound was like."

So off the two went together, their heads bent close, their lips moving busily, as they gossiped with words that were to travel far.

Only Master Simon, his wife and his daughter, Margeret, knew the real reason why his garden and fields had greater success than any other's, knew of the ceaseless labour and genuine love that he expended upon his plants and flowers. Margeret loved them also, and would often rise early and go out with him to weed the hills of Indian corn, water the long beds of sweet-smelling herbs or coax some drooping shrub back to life and bloom. It was pleasant to be abroad then, when the grey mists lying over the wide, quiet harbour began to lift and turn to silver, when the birds were singing in the great forest near by and the dark-leaved bayberry

bushes dropped their dew like rain when she brushed against them. Then she would see, also, mysterious forms slipping out of the dark wood, the graceful, silent figures of the friendly Indians, who also got up before the dawn and came hither for long talks with their good friend, Master Simon. They brought him flowers, roots and herbs that grew in this new country, while he, in turn, gave them plants sprung from English seed, taught them such of the white men's lore as might better their way of living and offered much sage counsel as to the endless quarrels that were always springing up among them between tribe and tribe.

"It is strange and not quite fitting that those heathen savages should follow you about like dogs," the villagers used to tell him, a little jealous, perhaps, that he should be as kind to his red-skinned friends as he was to his Puritan comrades. But Master Simon would only smile and go on his way, undisturbed by what they said.

When the long, warm evenings came and Margeret and her mother brought their spinning wheels to the doorstep that they might use the last ray of daylight for their work, Master Simon would labour beside them, tending now the roses and the yellow evening-primroses before the cottage. And he would tell, as he worked, of those other primroses that grew in English lanes, of blossoming hedge-rows and soaring larks and all the other strange beauties of that dear country across the sea. Sometimes Margeret's mother would bend her head low over her spinning to hide the quiet tears, as he told of the great, splendid garden where he had learned his

skill with plants and herbs, a garden of long terraces and old grey sundials and banks of blooming flowers. It was there that he and she had walked together in the moonlight, and had planned, with hearts all unafraid, for the day when they should be married and should set sail for that new land that seemed so far away. But there was no sadness or regret in Master Simon's heart.

"Some day," he would say, straightening up from his work and looking about him with a happy smile; "some day we shall have just such another garden planted here in the wilderness, at the very edge of the world that white men know."

This year, however, as he and Margeret planted the garden in unsuspecting peace of mind, there was strange talk about them running through the village. Much as the good Puritans had left behind them in England, there was one thing that was bound to travel with them beyond the seas, their love of gossip about a neighbour. The whispered words of Samuel Skerry had travelled from Goody Parsons to those who dwelt nearest her, and from them to others, until soon the whole town was buzzing with wonder concerning Master Simon's garden and that secret thing that lay hidden in its midst. There were many people who owed him friendship and gratitude for past kindness, but there was not one who, on hearing the news, could refrain from rushing to the nearest house and bursting in with the words:

"Oh, neighbour, have you heard—?" the rest always following in eager whispers.

Thus the talk had gone the rounds of the village

until it reached the pastor of the church, where it fell like sparks into tow.

"I was ever mistrustful of Simon Radpath," cried the minister, Master Hapgood, when he heard the rumour. "That over-bright garden of his has long been a blot upon our Puritan soberness. Others have their door-yards and their garden patches, yes, but these sheets of bloom, these blazes of colour, I have always said that they argued something amiss with the man. He had also an easy way of forgiving sinners and rendering aid to those on whom our community frowned, that I liked none too well. Now we know, in truth, what he really is."

And off he set, post-haste to speak to the Governor of the Colony about this dreadful scandal in Hopewell.

Trouble, therefore, was coming upon Master Simon on that pleasant morning of late May when Margeret went out to swing on the white gate and listen to the robins singing in the linden tree. It was trouble in the form of a stern company of dark-clad men, who came striding down the lane beneath the young white-blooming apple saplings. There were the church deacons, the minister, the Assistants and the great Governor himself, come to inquire into this business of the garden and its mysteries. Beside the Governor walked a stranger, a famous preacher from Scotland, whose strictness of belief and fierce denunciations of all those who broke the law, were known and dreaded throughout New England. Margeret dropped off the gate and ran full of wonder and alarm to tell her father.

It seemed, however, that the thoughts of these

sober-faced public officers were not concerned entirely with Master Simon and his wickedness. The Governor bore a letter in his hand and was discussing with his friend from Scotland, Master Jeremiah Macrae, the new and great danger that was threatening the Colony. The friendly Indians, the peaceable Wampanoags, were becoming restless and holding themselves aloof from their former free intercourse with the people of the settlements. Other tribes more fierce and savage than they, were pressing upon them and crowding them more and more into the territory occupied by the whites. The Wampanoags, it was said, were being harassed by the Mohegans, old and often-fought enemies, while they, in turn, were being driven from their homes by the terrible Nascomi tribes, who dwelt far away but were so war-like and cruel that their name had ever been used as a bye-word to frighten naughty Indian babies into good behaviour. Should such an avalanche of furious red-skinned warriors descend upon them, what could the little Colony of Puritans, with its four cannon and only fifty fighting-men, do to defend their lives and the homes that they had built with such courageous toil?

It was small wonder, then, that all the beauty and freshness of the full-flowering Spring could not arouse the heavy thoughts of the Governor and his companions. Then, at the turn of the lane, they came in sight of a strange group, so sinister and alarming that the whole company stood still and more than one man laid his hand on his sword. Full in the way stood three tall, silent Indians, mightier of limb and fiercer of aspect than any the

white men had ever seen before, their hawk-like faces daubed with gaudy colours and their strange feathered war-bonnets sweeping to their very heels. A trembling Wampanoag, brought as interpreter, advanced at the bidding of his imperious masters and strove vainly to find words with which to repeat his message.

"Come," said the Governor, "speak out. What can these strangers have to say to us?"

The interpreter, after more than one effort, managed to explain as he was ordered. These Indians had come from far away across the mountains and were of those dreaded Nascomis, a branch of the terrible Five Nations. They had heard of the new settlers and had come to look at their lands, intending, if they found them too good for aliens, to return later with all their warriors and drive the white men forth.

"And true it is that they will do so," added the Wampanoag, dropping from halting English into his own tongue when he found that one or two of those present could understand him. "There is no Indian of our tribe who does not hear all his life terrifying stories of these Nascomis, and of how, once in long periods of time, they change their hunting grounds and have no mercy on those who dwell in the land of their desire."

The Governor, in spite of the deep misgiving that all knew must be weighing at his heart, spoke his answer with unmoved calm.

"We will have speech with you later," he said through the interpreter, "for the present we have grave business with Master Simon Radpath. If you

wish you may follow and come afterward to my house where we will treat further of this errand of yours."

The Indians, with unchanging faces, turned and walked down the lane beside the Puritan company. They talked together in their strange guttural language, pointing out this or that peculiarity of the white men's dress and seeming to regard them with far less of awe than mere curiosity. It was a short and bitterly uncomfortable journey that brought the gathering of elders, in small humour for any kindness of heart, to Master Simon's gate.

As Margeret stood beside her father, greeting these unexpected and disturbing guests, she happened to glance across the sunlit field and saw Skerry, the shoemaker, and the boy who was his apprentice, standing before the door of their cottage. The little cobbler was shading his eyes with his hand and watching the dark procession as eagerly as though he had some deep concern in their errand. The ragged boy, however, seemed to have no interest in the matter, or no liking for it, since he stood with head turned away, staring down at the blue harbour and the wide-winged, skimming sea-gulls. The little girl observed them for only one moment, the next, and all her thoughts were drowned in wonder and alarm at the Governor's words.

"It has come to our ears, sir," he was saying sternly, "that you have here a garden too gay for proper Puritan minds, a place too like the show gardens of the Popish monasteries, or of the great lords that dwell amid such sinful luxury in England. In this Colony men and women have sat in the stocks

for wasting precious hours over what shows only beauty to the eye and brings no benefit to the mind and heart. But what is that?" he broke off abruptly, sniffing suddenly at a vague sweet perfume that drifted down the May breeze.

"Please, sir, 'tis hawthorn," said Margeret, who was losing her terror of the Governor in curiosity at the sight of the Indians. "There was but a little sprig that Father brought from England, grown now to a great, spreading bush."

A sudden change came over the Governor's stern face. Had he a stabbing memory of wide, smooth English meadows, yellow daffodils upon a sunny slope and hedges sweet with hawthorn blossom in the Spring? None of the Pilgrims ever spoke of the homesickness that often assailed their steadfast hearts, but, as the Governor and Master Simon looked into each other's eyes, each knew of what the other was thinking. It was of some much loved and never forgotten home in England, perhaps, some bit of woods or meadow or narrow lane leading up a windy hill. The offending garden would have been in a fair way toward being forgiven had not the Scotch minister come forward and plucked the Governor by the sleeve.

"See, see!" he said, pointing. "Just look yonder."

Truly that was no sight for sober Puritan eyes! There beside the linden tree was a great bed of tulips, a blaze of crimson and gold, like a court lady's scarf or the cloak of a king's favourite. Against the green of the hedge, the deep red and

clear yellow were fairly dazzling in the sunshine. The Governor scowled and drew back.

"Of what use," cried the minister in his loud harsh voice. "Of what use on earth can be such a display of gaudy finery?"

There were three members of that company who could answer him. The Indian ambassadors, laughing aloud like children, dropped upon their knees before the glowing flower bed, plucked great handfuls of the brilliant blossoms, filled their quivers, their wampum belts and their blankets with the shining treasure and turned to gaze with visible awe at the owner of all these riches.

"Do you not see," said Master Simon to the minister, an unsubdued twinkle in his eye, "that there is nothing permitted to grow upon this good, green earth that has not its use?"

"Such a flaunting of colour," said the Governor severely, yet perhaps with the ghost of a smile held sternly in check, "has not our approval. Now I would see what lies behind that hedge."

Little Margeret looked up at her father and turned pale; even Master Simon hesitated and was about to frame an excuse, but it was too late. A shrill, terrible scream arose from behind the thick bushes.

"There, there, did I not tell you?" cried one of the deacons, and the whole company pressed forward into the inner garden.

They saw, at first, only a smooth square of grass, rolled and cut close like the lawns in England. Four cypress trees, dug up in the forest and trimmed to

some semblance of the clipped yews that grace formal gardens, stood in a square about the hewn stone column that bore a sundial. Quiet, peaceful and innocent enough the place seemed — but there again was that terrible scream. Out from behind a shrub came strutting slowly the chief ornament of the place, Margeret's pet, Master Simon's secret, a full-grown, glittering peacock. Seeing a proper company of spectators assembled, the stately bird spread its tail and walked up and down, turning itself this way and that to show off its glories, the very spirit of shallow and empty vanity. For pure amazement and horror, the Governor and his companions stood motionless and without speech.

But if the Englishmen were frozen to the spot, it was far otherwise with the Indians. They flung themselves upon their faces before the terrifying apparition, they held up their hands in supplication that it would do them no harm. Then, after a moment of stricken fear and upon the peacock's raising its terrible voice again, they sprang to their feet, fled through the gate and up the lane, and paused not once in their headlong flight until they had disappeared into the sheltering forest. The Governor drew a long breath, caught Master Simon's eye and burst into a great roar of laughter.

"You have done us a good turn, you and your silly, empty-headed bird," he said, "though I was of a mind for a moment to put it to death and to set you in the pillory for harbouring such a creature of vanity. Yet for the sake of his help against a dreaded foe, you shall both be spared. Now see

that you order your garden more soberly and that no further complaints come to my ears."

He turned to go.

"If you please, may we keep the tulips?" begged Margeret, curtseying low, her voice shaking with anxiety.

"Yes, little maid," was the gracious answer, "you may keep your tulips since you cannot use them for gold as those poor savages thought they could. And go, pluck me a branch of that hawthorn blossom that smells so sweet. It grew — ah, how it grew in the fair green lanes of my own dear Nottinghamshire."

With the sprig of hawthorn in his grey coat, and with a bow to Margeret as though she had been some great lady, the Governor passed out into the lane followed by all his company, deacons, Assistants and Master Hapgood. Only the minister, Jeremiah Macrae, lingered inside the gate. Suddenly he lifted both his arms toward heaven and spoke out loudly in his great, harsh voice. With his dark cloak flying about him and his deep-set eyes lit by a very flame of wrath, he looked to Margeret like one of the prophets of old, such as were pictured in her mother's great Bible. She trembled and crept nearer to her father.

"Think not, Simon Radpath," the minister thundered, "that, although you have won the Governor's forgiveness by a trick, there the matter ends. Woe be unto you, O sinful man, unless you destroy the gaudy vanity of this wicked garden. Change your ways or fire and sword shall waste this place, blood

shall be spilled upon its soil and those who come after you shall walk, mourning, among its desolate paths."

Margeret gasped with terror, but Master Simon, though a little pale, stood his ground undaunted.

"I, too, have made a prophecy concerning my garden," he answered. "It is carved yonder about the edge of the sundial, and the climbing roses are reaching up to cover the words for it will be long before their truth is proved. It may be that this spot will see flame and sword and the shedding of blood, for new countries and new ideas must be tried in the fire before they can live. But my prophecy is for peace and growth, yours for war and destruction — a hundred years from now men shall know which of us spoke truly."

"'A hundred years from now,'" repeated the minister scornfully. "Think you that, after the half of that time, there will be any man who remembers you, or your words, or your garden?"

He strode across the lawn, plucked aside roughly the trailing rose-vines at the edge of the sundial and read the words carved deep in the grey stone. Then, with no comment, nor any word of leave-taking, he went out through the gate and up the lane. Margeret stood long watching him as he climbed the steep path. His figure looked very black in the clear, white sunshine, very ill-omened and forbidding even as it grew small in the distance and finally vanished over the crest of the hill.

CHAPTER II

MASTER SIMON'S PILGRIMAGE

IN spite of Master Macrae's ominous words, all was for a time quiet and at peace in Master Simon's pleasant, sunny garden. Peace prevailed also among the Colonists and their Indian allies, the rumours of warfare slowly died away and, while Spring grew into summer, and summer glowed and bloomed and faded into autumn, everywhere in the little Colony were happiness and contentment. The fields were yellow with abundant grain, the apple-trees bent with a generous load, the sacks of dried peas and the great golden pumpkins were piled high upon the floor of the public granary. There would be no want and famine this winter!

Margeret walked beside her father down through the field where he had been piling the rustling corn-stalks into tall heaps like Indian wigwams. She stopped often to hearken to the cawing of the crows, who were gathering their band and making ready to go South, and to watch a busy chipmunk carrying grain and nuts to his store-house under the wall.

"I would that all the world were as bright and happy as this corner of it," said Master Simon, as he paused in his work to look down over the sloping meadows to the shining waters of the harbour and the rude little fishing-boats coming to anchor. "But

look," he added, "who is that yonder in our garden beckoning us to come quickly? It is the pastor, Master Hapgood, and two Indians with him, while the other — why, it is the Governor himself! What can be amiss now? Since our peacock has been banished to England, I can think of naught else for which we may be brought to justice."

It was indeed the Governor, anxious-faced and troubled in mien, who came forward to meet them.

"One of the same Nascomi ambassadors has come hither again," he said, "to ask some favour of us. That much I can make out from the interpreter, but for the rest, his message is so strange and his English words so few that we have come to you, who understand the Wampanoag tongue better than does any other, to learn what he would say. Further, I think that his errand has somewhat to do with you."

Master Simon turned his quick, bright eyes upon the Indian interpreter.

"Speak on," he said, and listened with a face growing graver and more disturbed with every word the Wampanoag and the Nascomi uttered. He turned at last to the Governor.

"They speak of a terrible pestilence," he explained, "a scourge that has visited the Nascomis and has already slain a goodly number. I have heard often from the Indians hereabout of these plagues, by which many times whole tribes, even entire nations have been swept away."

"But what wants the fellow with us?" inquired the Governor.

"He has come to beg that we pray to our god

for their deliverance," said Master Simon at last.

"What?" cried the pastor. "To our God? Is it possible that these Nascomis are Christians?"

"No," returned Master Simon slowly, "he speaks not of the God we know. He begs us to pray for him to that shining god with the terrible voice and a hundred glittering eyes, that walked in this garden six months since and struck such terror to the hearts of himself and his companions. He says that they have asked in vain for help from their own gods and he has come all this long and perilous way to make his prayer, poor savage, to my banished peacock."

The Governor's face grew dark with trouble, but the minister's became suddenly transformed with a fury of righteous anger. It was not for nothing that he had listened to the now famous Jeremiah Macrae and his fierce threatenings of Heaven's vengeance.

"Simon Radpath," he cried, striving to thunder forth his words as did the great minister, but succeeding only a scant half as well; "Simon Radpath, you have committed the most grievous sin known to the human race. You have led a man, nay, a whole nation into idolatry, into worshipping as a god that vain iniquitous creature you so wickedly harboured here."

"But please, sir, they were heathen already," faltered little Margeret, stirred to fearful boldness by all this wrath against her father.

"That matters not," was the stern reply. "He has aided and increased their heathenism, so that their last state is worse than their first. Heaven

alone can tell what punishment he should suffer for so unspeakable a wrong."

"Heaven, sir," said Master Simon, speaking slowly and quietly; "Heaven has also given me the opportunity to make reparation. Margeret, go tell your mother to fetch my great cloak and to gather such things as I need for a journey, and to put into a basket all the herbs that are drying up among the rafters. Many times have I talked with the Indians about these pestilences and pondered upon what might have power to check them: now I will put my knowledge to the test. I will go back with the Nascomi messenger to see how I can help his afflicted people."

Hurriedly obedient, but with her whole heart crying out in protest, Margeret ran to the house to do her errand. Her mother, rising from her spinning wheel, quickly made the necessary preparations, although scarcely understanding their purpose. Puritan women in those troubled times had learned to act promptly and without asking for explanations. When they came forth from the house, bearing bundles and the big basket, the same little group still stood, unmoving by the gate, while the pastor, holding up his hand, was speaking loudly, as though in the pulpit.

"And if you die far away amid that godless nation," he was saying, "it will be only Heaven's judgment upon you and the vanities of this wicked garden."

Then it was that of a sudden, Master Simon's quiet manner dropped from him.

"Cease your preaching of death and destruction,

Master Hapgood," he cried, "and go, rather, up into your meeting-house yonder and pray. Pray with all your might to that God who once walked in a Garden, that He will spare me for this people's need, so that they may learn that when they come hither to ask for help from Him and us, they do not ask in vain."

Thus he spoke and then, in a moment, was gone. A hurried kiss to Margeret and to her mother, a sign to the Indians, and the little party set off, up the steep lane, across the boulder-strewn clearing and into the forest. Margeret ran panting behind them for a little way, then, blinded with weeping, stumbled over a stone and lay sobbing in the grass. A strong arm came about her and lifted her up.

"Do not fear, little maid," said the Governor's great voice, grown strangely gentle now. "God will not suffer so brave and good a man as your father to perish. He will come safe back to you again."

It was thus that Master Simon went into the wilderness, leaving behind him, in the little house on the hillside, two very heavy, loving hearts.

"Will he come back? Will he come back?" seemed to Margeret to be the refrain that sang through every one of the autumn sounds, the creaking of the grain-carts, the blows of the threshing-flails, the thumping of the batten in the busy loom.

Many friendly neighbours, remembering past kindnesses, brought in what was left of Master Simon's harvest, gathered a store of fire wood, banked the house with earth and leaves and made all ready against the cold. More than once the Governor

came to offer his respects to Mistress Radpath and to bid her and her little daughter be of good cheer — events that made the villagers stare, for a visit from the Governor was an awesome thing. Master Hapgood, the pastor, came also many times to ask for news, although he seemed not yet to know whether he should praise Master Simon's courage or continue to condemn his wickedness.

The Scottish minister, Master Jeremiah Macrae, was still in the Colony, preaching vehemently up and down the land, crying to the people to repent of their grievous sins before it was too late. Many a time, so it came to the ears of Hopewell, had he denounced Master Simon, his garden and all that grew therein. From town to town he went, until all of New England began to stir uneasily under the lash of his bitter tongue.

"He may do good and he may do ill," said their neighbour, Goodman Allen, to Mistress Radpath. "We are used to being called to account for our sins and there is no one among us, Heaven knows, that can be called perfect. But this man, when I listen to his preaching, tempts me to be more of a sinner than less of one, so sure is he that we are all condemned to eternal punishment together. His words are more than even a good Puritan can bear, he threatens us with Heaven's wrath until we grow weary and indifferent, while with his tales of hellfire he frightens the children so that they are afraid to go to bed alone."

Margeret shivered as she stood listening to their honest neighbour's words. It was quite true that the

strange minister had haunted her own dreams for many a night.

"Some folk," the man went on, "say that he speaks like one of the prophets of old, come back to earth again. But I say," here he dropped his voice and glanced anxiously about the shadowy kitchen; "I say that he may not be a prophet, but the Devil himself that we have in our midst. We will mark well his words concerning Master Simon's garden, and if they come true, then will we know what to think."

It appeared to Margeret, through all that autumn, that the world went very much awry. It was only a part of the general sadness of all things that, when she went one day to carry a basket of apples to Goody Parsons, she found the old woman sitting on the bench before her door in the pale autumn sunshine, weeping bitterly. The climbing rose that she had brought with her from England and that had grown to the very top of her cottage door, had drooped all summer and now trailed forlornly across the grey logs, dead beyond any doubt.

"Great, fragrant white roses it bore," said the old woman, choking over her words, "roses that I carried in my hand the day I was married, and that my three daughters carried too, on their wedding days, each in her turn. The dearest memory that I have is of our little cottage in Hertfordshire, where the bee-hives stood in a long, sun-warmed row beside the hedge and the rose vine climbed to the very eaves, covering the whole wall with leaf and blossom. And now my rose is dead, a punishment, I can

well see, for the harm I did your good father by means of my idle, gossiping tongue."

"But listen," Margeret said, "do you not remember that my father once told you that this rose was finer than any in our garden and you gave him some of the shoots to plant among our own? We have one now, climbing high on our house wall and the others I know are still growing down by the hedge. So to-morrow you shall have a new plant of the very same rose, to grow as tall and bloom as gaily as the last."

"Bless me now," cried Goody Parsons, a smile breaking through her tears. "You are your father's own good daughter, little Mistress, and have almost made me happy again. But I never can be quite so until I can forget the harm my chattering has done or until I see Master Simon come safe home out of that terrible wilderness."

The new little rose took most kindly to the transplanting that Margeret so skilfully accomplished, and stood strong and sturdy beside the door, its twigs still green long after the leaves had fallen from the trees and the misty Indian summer had taken possession of the land.

"I believe that when Spring comes it will grow as fast as that stocking you are knitting," laughed Margeret one day, when she came to inspect its progress.

The old woman nodded and smiled.

"I hope to see it climb to the top of my door again before I die," she answered. "Heaven grant me time for that and to end my evil gossiping ways. Do you know that neighbour Allen —" she checked

herself suddenly and added, with a sigh, "There I go again! Take heed, my lass, and see how hard it is to mend a fault when you have grown old." And she closed her lips with firmness and fell to knitting furiously.

Margeret could not forbear laughing again and was still smiling to herself as she took her way across the hill. The leafless woods stood black and bare against a pale yellow sky, and a little thin new moon hung low behind the tree-tops. She was surprised to find herself so happy to-night, as though in such a fair world there could not be so much of trouble and sadness as she had thought. Just where her path skirted the forest's edge she caught sight of a dark figure moving among the black shadows of the tree-trunks, and presently she saw it come out of the wood and go down the lane before her.

"Is it Samuel Skerry?" she wondered, as the form, vague in the twilight, turned into the path that led to the shoemaker's cottage. "But no, it is too tall for the cobbler, it must be that boy who lives with him. What has he been seeking in the wood? The fruits and berries are all gone and he had no gun. I wonder!"

Her idle speculations did not, however, last long, for as soon as she reached home and fell to telling her mother of Goody Parsons and the rose, her thoughts of the shoemaker's apprentice were swept away.

She had a visit from him, nevertheless, some weeks later, a visit that surprised her more than the coming of the Governor himself. Early one bitter windy morning, as she knelt shivering on the hearth

trying to blow the reluctant fire into flame, there came a knock at the outer door. Upon the threshold, that was banked deep with the first heavy snow, stood the ragged boy who dwelt at Samuel Skerry's. His teeth were chattering and his fingers trembling with the cold, but his dark blue eyes were shining with excitement.

"There has been a fox in your hen house these three nights past," he said, "and so I arose early this morning and see, here he is."

The body of the red marauder trailed over his arm, its great brush dragging limply in the snow. It had been with helpless dismay that Margeret and her mother had noticed the loss of their fowls, so that this news brought relief indeed.

"Oh, thank you, thank you!" she cried. "But I fear your watch has been a bitter cold one. Come in and warm yourself, you must be well-nigh frozen."

The boy hesitated.

"My master, the shoemaker —" he began, but Margeret interrupted him, borrowing the stern manner she had seen her mother use on similar occasions.

"Come in at once," she commanded, and when he shyly obeyed she shut the door behind him lest he escape.

He sat down upon the stool in the chimney corner and, when she once more attempted to blow the fire, took the bellows gravely from her and in a moment had the flames leaping high, flooding the kitchen with ruddy light. Margeret filled her pewter bowl brimful with steaming porridge and watched with pleasure as her guest ate with unconcealed hun-

ger. She brought bread and cheese and a cup of milk which she set upon the bench beside him, and then busied herself about the kitchen lest she should seem to be staring at her unwonted visitor. Each eyed the other shyly when occasion offered, but looked away quickly when their glances happened to meet. He seemed to be watching her golden hair shining in the firelight, while she, by peeping into the old round mirror that hung upon the wall, could see how black were his hair and eyelashes and how dark blue were the eyes with which he stared at her when her back was turned. She felt friendly enough and anxious to put her companion at his ease, and so, apparently, did he, but neither knew what to say and so the meal was finished in silence. It was Mistress Radpath's footstep on the stair that roused him suddenly to speech.

"Oh, I must go," he cried, springing up. "Samuel Skerry will be awake and waiting for me this long time. He will want to strike me for my delaying."

And out of the door he sped, in greater terror, it seemed however, of Margeret's mother than of his master, the shoemaker. The little girl, watching him through the window as he crossed the white field, realised suddenly that she had not even thought to ask his name. Often after that day she wondered who he could be, and many times looked wistfully across the waste of snow toward the neighbouring cottage. Although she saw him now and then, passing in and out of the distant doorway, he did not come near their house again. Goodman Allen's wife, who came to sew with Mistress Radpath, dropped a bit of gossip concerning him.

"We are all wondering who that shoemaker's apprentice can be," she said. "He is no kin of Samuel Skerry's, of that you may be sure, for he is far too pleasant-faced and gentle-mannered. The town officer went to ask, as was his duty, but could get no information from the boy's master. Skerry said the lad was named Roger Bardwell, that he would answer for him and that was all. We all wonder where the boy can have come from; there is not one of us who does not like him."

That, it seemed, was the sum of Hopewell's knowledge of the shy, ragged, handsome lad.

Early in December there came, suddenly, a furious storm of wind and snow, that covered the fields, blocked the roads and drifted so deep about the houses that many of them were buried to the very eaves. It was the worst that the Colonies had ever known in all of their short history. For three days the gale shrieked about the staunch little cottages and roared down the chimneys, while those who dwelt within toiled unceasingly to build the fires up and keep the bitter cold at bay. When finally the storm had died away, when paths had been dug and people were able to go to and fro again, the strangest news suddenly went racing through the village. The Scotch minister, who had been upsetting the peace of all New England, had disappeared. He had set forth, people said, on a journey from Boston to Salem, travelling alone as was his custom, and, save for one man who had met him at the edge of the forest, struggling along in the face of the rising gale, no mortal eye had ever seen him again. That he had lost his way and perished among the drifts, was

easy enough to believe, but the good people of Hopewell had another thing to say.

"The Devil came to take his own again," many of them declared openly, for in those rough times the Devil was a more familiar figure than in later days and more than one of the Pilgrim Fathers laid claim to having seen him, horns and hoofs and tail and all. And while some folk were not quite so free-spoken as to agree with the opinion of their bolder neighbours, yet they too shook their heads and said:

"Watch Master Simon's garden, there will his burning words be proven, whether true or false."

For the thought that, unspoken, filled to the brim every good heart in Hopewell was:

"Where was Master Simon through all that bitter storm and will he ever come back to tend his garden again? We can spare a dozen Scotch ministers, but never one Simon Radpath."

December, January and February went by, each one, it seemed to Margeret, covering the span of a year. March slipped past with roaring winds and melting snows, then came April and Spring again. Listlessly she watched the apple trees grow green, saw the warm pink of the Mayflowers showing under the brown leaves and heard the returning birds calling to one another in the meadow. Once she had loved all these things, but what did they matter now if Master Simon was never to see them again?

Then, one night, she was awakened suddenly by — she knew not what. Was it the moonlight, dropping in shining white squares upon the rough floor of her room? Was it a far-off dog barking in the village?

No, it was something different, the sound of footsteps, hushed, but so many in number that even above the slight noises of the night they must still be heard. She sprang from her bed and ran to the window. Down the lane came a strange procession, slim dark figures moving almost without a sound, Indian after Indian, in numbers that seemed to have no end, while, in the midst, came her own dear father, leaning on the arm of the tall warrior at his side. At the very last came an Indian boy, carrying a ragged bundle and the very basket into which she had put the herbs so many months ago. There was something so absurd in seeing even her basket come home safe from that far journey that she laughed out loud in the midst of the moonlit silence.

It was a quiet that, however, did not last long. Dogs barked, doors flew open, voices cried out, "Welcome home, Master Radpath," and eager stumbling feet, hastily shod in heavy boots, came running down the stony paths. The weary traveller was brought in to be warmed, fed and embraced; a messenger was sent in haste to the house where the Governor lodged that night. Through all the village spread the news that Simon Radpath had come home and that with him had journeyed a great chief of the Nascomis, to smoke the pipe of everlasting peace with the white settlers. Early in the morning the town-crier was despatched to spread the tidings through the whole district.

What a proud moment it was for Margeret when she heard this great official's huge, deep voice crying from the cross-roads:

" Hear ye, good people all! Master Simon Radpath is come safe and sound to his home again."

It was a prouder moment still when she went, on the next Sabbath, up to the meeting-house and, sitting among the women, could see her father opposite in his place of honour, with many glances turning sidewise to gaze at him as the hero of the day. Samuel Skerry, from his bench near the door, was regarding him from under scowling brows, but the boy beside him followed Master Simon's every movement with eager, worshipping eyes. Proudest of all was Margeret when the pastor ascended into the pulpit and gave public thanks to God that " their good comrade, who had made a far journey into the wilderness, who had ministered successfully to a stricken people and who had brought about a momentous treaty of peace, had come safe home again to his Puritan companions, to his wife and daughter and to his little garden on the hill.

" There be some of us," he ended, " who thought that garden was blessed and some who thought it was accursed, and I, as Heaven is my witness, am not yet certain whether it is or no. But of one thing we can be sure, since it is plain to all eyes to-day, that Simon Radpath is the truest and bravest Pilgrim of us all."

CHAPTER III

ROOFS OF GOLD

"HAVE a care, little Mistress, there are duck eggs in that basket."

The warning, called forth anxiously by Goodwife Allen, leaning over her half-door, was quite unheeded by rebellious Margeret, who hurried out of the gate, swinging her burden quite as recklessly as before.

She felt herself to be in a very rash mood that morning, for was she not already in disgrace both at home and abroad? She had committed a very terrible offence on the day before, the Sabbath, after she had been sitting long on the hard bench in the meeting-house, shuffling her feet, kicking her heels together and watching the sand of the pulpit hour-glass drop slowly, grain by grain, as though it would never mark the sermon's end. When Master Hapgood, as though in absence of mind, had turned the glass over, a signal that his talk would last for perhaps an hour more, she had heaved a long, loud sigh that resounded, in a pause of the speaker's, to the furthest corner of the meeting-house. Many of the Puritan maids giggled openly, and more than one man, including Master Simon, smiled behind his hand, although the pastor's black frown would have made any but the most abandoned child bow her head in shame. Yet even to her mother's sorrowful

chiding on the way home, Margeret had not replied meekly as a Puritan maid should.

This morning, when she had been sent with a bundle of herbs to Goodwife Allen's and had been directed to come quickly home again, she was openly loitering on the road and planning to stop when she reached the wide, sunny marsh and gather some of the gorgeous wild flowers that she had noticed when she passed. She was weary, she told herself, of all these strict rules, never to run and romp in the lanes, never to wear gay ribbons or bright dresses, always to sit quiet on the hard benches through the long, long, Sunday sermons. Presently, as she reflected thus and swung her basket in time to her rebellious thoughts, one of the duck eggs rolled over the edge and smashed in the dusty road.

"I don't care," cried Margeret, stamping her foot, although there was no one to hear or see. "I don't care!"

She might just as well have broken them all for, when she reached home, an hour later, laden with an armful of bright marsh flowers, her mother asked her for the eggs and she suddenly recollected that she had set the basket down upon a tussock as she waded in the swamp and had left it there.

"There is no time to go back to seek it now," was all Mistress Radpath said.

Margeret knew that she ought to declare that she was sorry, but naughtiness and impatience seemed to have fastened upon her that day and she kept silent.

"Bring out your spinning-wheel, my child," said her mother a little later. "Neighbour Deborah

Page is ill and we must spin for her as well as ourselves to-day."

The little girl had just seen her father go past the door with his gardening tools on his shoulder and had been planning to follow and help him work among the flowers in the warm June sun. It was a pleasant day of clean-washed air and fresh salt breezes, one that she could scarce bear to think of spending within doors. She obeyed her mother very reluctantly, brought her wheel from its corner and sat down to spin. Her fingers were clumsy and her temper short so that in a moment she had tangled her thread and jerked the treadle so roughly that it snapped. Her mother's look of mute reproach was more than she could bear.

"I care not at all," she cried loudly and bitterly. "I wanted to break the hateful wheel. Little girls must play sometimes!"

So saying, she rushed out of the door slamming it to behind her. She saw Master Simon standing on the path, looking gravely and sorrowfully after her, but she did not give him time to speak. Taking refuge behind the great hawthorn bush she buried her face in the grass and burst into hot, angry tears.

After she had cried for some time and had, in part at least, washed away her wrath, she sat up to look about her and to wonder how, after all, she could have been so wicked. Across the meadow, filled with bobolinks, she could look down to the harbour where the full June tide was running in. A little boat, sailed she knew by Roger Bardwell, the shoemaker's apprentice, in such moments as he could steal from his harsh master, was flying joyously be-

fore the gay, warm wind. She could sniff a bewildering sweetness that filled the air, for the linden tree had bloomed the day before, driving Mistress Radpath's bees nearly mad with joy. She had heard them humming in the branches nearly the whole night through and to-day again their song was loud in her ears. Indeed, as she listened, the buzzing and whirring grew so insistent that she began to realise something had happened.

"Why," she exclaimed, "I believe that they are swarming."

Leaving her refuge behind the hawthorn bush, she peeped over the hedge of the little enclosed garden where the sundial stood and where the peacock had once dwelt. Yes, there beyond, under the apple trees stood her mother, with eager eyes and cheeks pink with excitement, as she held up the new hive and sought to lure the bewildered bees within. The air seemed full of their black whirring little bodies, which bye and bye, however, gathered close and finally settled in a huge dark mass, hanging from the linden tree like some strange, gigantic fruit. Then must Mistress Radpath exercise all her wiles, find the queen-bee and persuade her to enter the hive, to be followed at last by her train of black, buzzing courtiers.

"Now that was as skilfully managed as ever I saw it!" exclaimed Master Simon. "Scarce could I have done better myself."

He chuckled as he spoke for it was a well-known joke in the household that Master Simon, although equal to any other emergency that might arise, could not come in too great haste to call Mistress Radpath,

once the bees swarmed. He took the hive from her now and bent to kiss the successful bee-mistress before he went to put it in place beneath the apple-trees.

"Goody Parsons says I shall never have true skill until I learn to whisper charms and spells over the hives, as she does," returned Mistress Radpath. "She says — but oh, my spinning, I shall never have it done!"

She went quickly into the house, leaving Master Simon to set the hive in its place at the end of the long row that stretched across the back of the garden. Some of the hives, those that had been brought from England, were trim and blue-painted, the others were roughly framed out of wood cut in the forest. It chanced that the one just put into place was the best and most elaborate of all, for it had a pane of glass in its side through which one could see the newcomers already turning to the work that would result in the building up of a golden honeycomb. Margeret, her anger almost forgotten now, slipped across the grass and stood at her father's side, watching too. As she came near he murmured to himself a line that she had heard him quote before:

"The singing masons, building roofs of gold."

"Father," she said, putting her hand into his and speaking hesitatingly, as she was not quite sure how she would be received, "what do those words mean and where did you first hear them?"

She was quite astonished when, for answer, Master Simon burst into a hearty laugh.

"My child," he said, "that is almost the very

question that was asked me forty years ago by my elderly Aunt Matilda of whom I was that moment thinking. And with that scowl upon your face, you look not unlike the severe dame herself as she asked it."

"Ah, tell me about it," begged Margeret, the scowl disappearing and the last of her anger quite swept away. She loved her father's stories, especially those that had to do with his boyhood and that fierce and redoubtable Aunt Matilda.

Master Simon turned to the bench under the linden tree, at the edge of the little enclosed garden, and took her upon his knee.

"And so," he queried, "that gust of temper is all gone by and you are willing to be friends with your father and mother again? What was it that put you into such a sudden passion? I did not know that you hated so to spin."

"It was not just the spinning," returned Margeret, hanging her head. "It was because I was weary of working so much and being so dull and sober. It was because"— here was so terrible a confession that she could scarce bring it forth —"because I did not like to be a Puritan maid and did not want to be good."

Her father only laughed and held her close.

"We all of us have that same thought at times," he said, "and in every heart there stirs, now and then, an impatience with the strict and bare Puritan life. We, who, when children, saw some of the glitter and gorgeousness of that golden age in England, the reign of Queen Elizabeth, cannot but feel a longing, sometimes, for that splendid pomp and

show from which we have turned aside. It would be odd did not the echoes of our hidden desire still sound in the hearts of our sons and daughters. I can never forget how the great Queen once made a royal progress through the town near which I dwelt, and how I ran in the dust beside her procession, staring with all my eyes at the glittering array. Such shining soldiers, such ladies clad in velvet and cloth of gold, such heavy banners fluttering in the hot air! No Queen in a fairy tale could have shown a more splendid picture. And when I went back to the cottage where I lived with my uncle and aunt, saw him in his dark coat and Aunt Matilda in her scant grey dress, and looked about at the bare walls and the rough furniture, then I, like you, felt suddenly that it was a dreary business this of trying to be a good Puritan. Yet the following of our faith is not all, thank Heaven, in wearing a sober coat and going to meeting six hours every Sabbath."

"Did you ever see the Queen again?" asked Margeret.

"Yes, I saw and spoke with her once, when I was still a little boy and she was an old woman. How I chanced to see her, and how my staid uncle broke through our strictest Puritan law, are both parts of the story that I was to tell you. Well, we will have the story first and then talk a little further of this grievous business of being a Puritan.

"You must remember," he began, as Margeret nestled closer against his arm, "since I have told you so often, that all through my boyhood I lived with my uncle at the edge of a great, wonderful

garden that belonged, not to any of the people thereabout, but to the English Crown. It was there that Queen Bess, when she was but the Princess Elizabeth Tudor, had lived when she was a girl. There, too, my father, Robert Radpath, who was heir to the neighbouring estates, used to play with her when they were children and up to the time when she became Queen. He never saw her after that day when she set off to London to assume the crown, but he was always loyal in her service and she stood ever his friend. He sailed on many of those long voyages for which Queen Elizabeth's reign is famous; he and others of her brave sailors risked much that her flag should fly in distant, unknown corners of the world. When my father became a Puritan and the persecuting laws bore so heavily upon all of that faith that even the Queen's interest seemed powerless to save him, she appointed him upon a mission to China, to bear a message from her to that far country's mighty ruler. From that voyage he never returned.

"I was a very little boy at the time of his going, but I remember him well and remember, too, the day the royal messenger came with a letter written in the Queen's own hand 'To my good friend and old comrade, Robin Radpath.' He brought also a gorgeously be-ribboned and red-sealed packet that was to be delivered to 'The Right, High, Mighty and Invincible Emperor of Cathaye,' with Elizabeth's signature upon it, written very large for the better reading of a monarch who knew only Chinese. In three days my father had sailed away in one of

her great high-prowed ships, sailed to meet disaster in some unknown sea, for he never came home again."

"And that was how you came to dwell with your uncle?" asked Margeret, for of this portion of her father's life she never had heard before.

"Yes, my mother being dead, her brother took me to his house where I lived henceforth with him and his sister, my Aunt Matilda. My father's Puritanism had cost him his estates, but my uncle, a humble man, had escaped the persecution that had, so far, struck only at the great lords. A rigid follower of the rules of his faith was my uncle, but my Aunt Matilda — ah, her strictness and severity left his far behind. He feared no man on earth, yet of his sister he was as afraid as was I.

"After all these years I cannot quite recollect how it befell that my uncle took me with him on a journey to London, it may have been only because I begged so hard to go. Even less can I tell you how he came to do the thing that almost above all else is forbidden to Puritans, to witness a show of play-actors. We were passing down a narrow crowded street when I saw a sign beside a gateway, a great placard setting forth that here within was to be enacted 'A new play by Master William Shakespeare, The Chronicle History of King Henry the Fifth, and His Glorious Victory of Agincourt.' I pulled my uncle's arm to call his attention, he hesitated, passed by the gate, came back again and finally, muttering 'Say naught of this to your aunt,' led me within.

"It was a strange sight for the eyes of a little Puritan boy fresh from the country, the rough plat-

form of the stage, the open space before it where stood a motley crowd of the common folk of London, the rows of boxes, and finally the gaily dressed actors who strode forth upon the boards. I believe rain fell upon us as we stood there, and that the sun came out and disappeared again, but to all that I gave little heed, for my heart and soul and eyes were with the gallant King Henry, speeding away to France. It was a play full of clashing arms, of ringing war-cries and hard-fought battles, yet in the midst of it there was one who came forth to describe the higher blessings of a peaceful kingdom, likening it to a bee-hive, with each member doing his appointed task and having joy in his work. It was thus he spoke of the bees, ' Singing masons building roofs of gold.' When the play was over, my uncle led me out, blind and deaf to the sights and sounds of London, only those stirring words ringing in my ears as they do still."

" And did your Aunt Matilda ever find you out? " inquired Margeret, hot on the trail of the rest of the story.

" My uncle made me promise again never to tell her," Master Simon continued with a chuckle, " but he might have known that a little boy, so full of one idea as I was of that play, must spill the news abroad somehow. It was the day after our return that I was playing on the grass before our cottage while my aunt sat knitting in the doorway. Suddenly she asked:

" ' Simon, what is it that you are muttering? '

" She spoke so quickly and sharply that I, lost in a maze of dreams that I scarce understood, had no

better wit than to tell her the line that was running through my head.

" ' Singing masons,' she snapped. ' What means that? There are no such words in the Bible and you have no business to be reading aught else. Where heard you that, Simon? '

" I had my scattered wits collected now, and I pretended not to hear.

" ' I think it is time I fed the hens,' I said with sudden dutifulness. ' See, the sun is almost down.'

" ' Not until you answer me,' she directed, but again I feigned not to hear and hurried across the grass. I heard her get up to follow and then I ran as fast as my short legs would permit.

" ' Simon,' she called after me, and I trembled lest I be caught and made to confess. I doubt whether she had the least suspicion of my uncle's iniquity, or whether it was more than her curiosity that had become so roused. But well I knew that once she asked a question she was bound to have an answer.

" Across the poultry yard I fled, despair in my heart, for I heard her footsteps coming close behind. I remember thinking that I could hide almost anywhere, being so little, but that the sun was so low that my great long shadow would betray me wherever I sought shelter. So I climbed the palings that bordered my uncle's ground, crossed the lane and squeezed through the hedge into the great garden over the way. Far off I could still hear my aunt's shrill, high voice calling ' Simon, Simon.'

" I have told you much of that garden, little Margeret, but never, never can I tell you enough; of the

spreading trees, the pleached walks that were cool long tunnels in the summer's heat, and of the high, dark hedges, through whose arches I could glimpse such wealth of colour and sunshine that it seemed I must be peeping into Paradise. I had walked there with my father when I was a tiny boy, and could still remember his tales of how he used to play there with the Princess Elizabeth, and how it was in the little enclosed garden at the centre, still called the Queen's Garden, that the news had come that the English throne was hers. We often went there together to see the clipped yew-trees that the English gardeners call 'maids-of-honour' and to watch the old, old peacock trail his shabby feathers across the grass. The yews, my father said, had been named by the Princess after her own maids-of-honour, and one in particular that would grow thin and straggling in spite of the gardener's care was called, after an unfortunately ugly and sharp-tempered lady of her company, 'Mistress Abigail Peckham.' After my father's death I used to play there still, although my aunt did not greatly approve. The gardeners — there were but few of them now, and all of them old, because the Queen came almost never to this estate of hers — were kind to me and taught me all I know of flowers and growing things.

"Had I not been in such haste to escape my aunt I should have noticed a group of people at the distant gate, men on horseback and women in hoods and cloaks as though they had come on a journey. I took small heed of them, however, my only thought being that in the Queen's little garden I should be safe from pursuit, since there scarce any person save

myself ever seemed to enter. Yet this time, as I came panting through the hedge, I started back in amazement for there was some one there. A tall woman stood beside the bench and, as she turned toward me, I saw that her hair was red and her skin yellow and wrinkled like old parchment. She was wrapped in a great, grey riding cloak, although between its folds I could catch the glitter of jewelled embroideries and velvet slashed with gold.

"'Robin!' she cried out when she saw me and then, in a moment added, 'No, no, Robin has long been dead.'

"'My name is Simon,' I told her, 'and I dwell with Master Parrish of this village,' for so I had been taught to say.

"She scarcely seemed to hear me, but stood looking about, her face working oddly as though she wished to weep but had well-nigh forgotten how. Thinking to cheer her, and wishing to show off the garden which I had begun to think of as my own, I touched her arm and pointed to the foremost yew-tree, lank and awkward after all the years.

"'That,' I said, 'is the Lady Abigail Peckham.'

"She looked at me in startled wonder.

"'How came you to know that, boy?' she asked sharply.

"'My father told me,' I answered, and, going from one to another of the maids-of-honour, I named them all, 'Cecelia, Eleanor, Gertrude and Anne.'

"'There is no one but my old playfellow who ever heard those names,' she said, the stiffness of her manner melting suddenly. 'You must be the son of Robin Radpath.'

" ' And you,' I answered boldly, for her smile had put me quite at ease, ' must be the great Queen Elizabeth of England.'

" ' Ay,' she returned, ' a queen who has outworn her time and who has come back to look once more before she dies upon the place where, of all her life, she was the happiest.'

" She began to move to and fro across the grass, seeming to greet each flower and shrub as though it were an old friend. Suddenly, however, she turned to me again.

" ' Are you of your father's faith? ' she inquired.

" ' Yes,' I told her. ' I am a Puritan.'

" ' You say it boldly, boy,' she said. ' Are you not afraid? No, you would scarce be your father's son, did you show fear. Ah, when I was young, I also was not afraid. I made men do as I willed and I forced a measure of tolerance upon my people. Now I am an old woman, bullied by my Ministers of State, who will not believe that until you let men worship as they will there can be no peace.'

" Then she took my hand and spoke so gravely and earnestly that I can never forget her words.

" ' Hark ye, lad,' she said, ' you shall bear a message from the age that is past to the age that is to come, a truth that an old woman has learned in tears and that the next generation, mayhap, must learn in blood. It is that the Gospel of Fear fills no churches, that no terror of imprisonment, pain or death will ever drive men from the religion they hold to be the true one. We of the Church of England have made our mistake and well-nigh learned our sorry lesson, but will you of the Puritan faith

have eyes to see more clearly, or will you, too, sow the Gospel of Fear for a bitter reaping?'

"I was but a little boy, Margeret, when I listened to those words, but I shall remember them as long as ever I live. Here in the New England, where we are planting our fields and gardens with all of what we loved best in the Old, we are planting too, as I can see, something more than gardens, the seeds of a new country and a new life. Yet sometimes I fear that in our laws there is too much of harshness and severity, that our faith is more a terror of God's wrath than a love for His kindness, that we also are planting deep the Gospel of Fear for a sorrowful reaping. It may be I am wrong and that man of fierce speech who cursed my garden was right after all. But, mistaken or not, we are doing a work that will some day prove to be a great one, so that we should all labour happily together like 'singing masons building roofs of gold.' That, to my mind, is what it is to be a Puritan. So shall we, Margeret, so easily grow weary of our task merely because the life seems bare and the labour long?"

"No, no," she cried, slipping from his knee and flinging her arms about his neck, "and if you will come in and mend my spinning wheel, I will set about doing my share this very minute. But do you think that my work for others might some day be a little greater than mere spinning and something not — not quite so dull? Must I wait until I am old to do more than that?"

Her father laughed cheerily.

"No, you need not wait until you are old," he

said, "but it does no harm to be spinning while the greater adventure is tarrying on the way. Who knows, it may be in waiting for you only just around the corner of the next year."

The sun stood high overhead as they went up the path together, while through the drone of the bees and the subdued twitter of the birds in the drowsy noonday, Margeret could hear the whirr of her mother's busy wheel. If all the toilers of hand and heart were like Mistress Radpath and Master Simon, the roofs of gold would soon be built to the very clouds.

CHAPTER IV

THE GOSPEL OF FEAR

THE higher task and the larger adventure were nearer to Margeret Radpath than she had thought. Neither she, nor her mother nor Master Simon as they went about their work through all those busy summer months had even a vague dream of what the first days of autumn would bring forth. Hopewell, falling ever into more placid ways with each year of quiet and prosperity, had begun to forget the excitements of its earlier history and to cease talking even of the strange vanishing of Jeremiah Macrae. It seemed, as it always does in peaceful times, as though nothing could ever again stir the calm order of the passing days.

If there was any one who had an inkling of what disturbing matters were in store it was the silent, shabby Roger Bardwell who did Samuel Skerry's errands, helped to mend Hopewell's rows of broken shoes and who, in spite of his shyness and the evil reputation of his master, seemed to have won the good will of all who knew him. It began to be that people bringing boots to be mended asked that the apprentice do the work instead of the cobbler himself for, as Goodwife Allen said:

"That surly Skerry makes me feel that with every stitch he puts into the leather he has sewed in a poisoned thought of me and mine."

At first the shoemaker took such requests as ill-naturedly as you would expect of so sour tempered a man; later he would merely shrug his shoulders and say:

"If the boy wishes to do twice as much work as his master, what have I to say? So be it you pay me the money I care not who bears the labour." For it was well known that Skerry loved money almost as much as he hated his fellow men.

Throughout this summer it began to happen more and more often that villagers, coming to ask for Roger Bardwell, found only the scowling master-cobbler, and on their inquiring where the boy might be were told that "he was off in the forest somewhere, wasting the precious minutes that might otherwise be turned into good silver coin."

"Ay, coin for you but not for him," Goody Parsons retorted one day. "When you pay the boy no wages you have no just cause for complaint if now and then he steals a moment for himself."

"A moment!" snarled Skerry. "Why, he is often gone for a whole day and a night and sometimes more. He used to waste his time sailing a boat down yonder on the bay, but now he has given up even that pastime for these endless expeditions into the wood."

"Tell me, friend, what errand takes him there and for such long spaces of time," inquired the Goody eagerly. "Tell me and I vow I will whisper it to no one."

The shoemaker rocked back and forth upon his stool in silent, ill-natured glee.

"And this is the dame who had sworn to give

over gossiping," he exclaimed. "No, you would not whisper it, you would shout it louder than could the town crier himself. Therefore I will not tell you."

"I think you do not know," returned Goody Parsons with spirit, and she flounced out of his workshop with as much haughtiness as her stiff old joints would permit. She left Skerry muttering and frowning over her remark, which had evidently come nearer to the truth than he liked. It was not often that the shoemaker's crafty curiosity failed to penetrate the most hidden mysteries, but in this matter of his helper's absence he seemed to have met with distinct failure. Whatever it was that took Roger Bardwell so often to the forest, whatever it was that made his blue eyes more serious and his face more sober every day, no questioning or spying on his master's part served to draw the secret from him.

Margeret Radpath saw him seldom, but even on those rare occasions she noticed how much graver and more troubled he seemed to be as time went by. Was Samuel Skerry so cruel to him, she wondered; was life within the same four walls with the shoemaker's rasping tongue so hard to bear? She wished often that she might know the truth of the matter and whether she or her father could be of any help.

She was sent one day with Master Simon's great snow boots that must be mended before the winter, and she tried, all the way across the field, to summon courage enough to offer Roger some word of sympathy and friendship. The shoemaker's cottage, with its wide-spreading eaves and small deep

windows looked somehow of a very lowering and forbidding aspect, as she made her way with failing spirit up the stone-flagged pathway to its door. It had been built almost the first of the cottages of Hopewell, not by Samuel Skerry, but by a stout-hearted weaver, one of the earliest settlers. He had gone now to dwell in Salem but throughout the first and most troubled years of the Colony's history he had lived here all alone. There was a tale that once an Indian, whom the weaver had made an enemy, had come there in the night seeking to kill the white man who was so bold as to dwell by himself. The weaver, a man of mighty strength, had overpowered the Indian, had cut the web from his loom and had bound his struggling foe to the great armchair that stood by the fire. Then he had calmly mounted once more to his high bench, had set up his weaving and had toiled busily the whole night through, singing as he worked. Neighbours came in the morning and, at the weaver's orders, released the Indian who slunk off into the forest inspired with a wholesome dread of these mad white men who feared nothing. Margeret thought, as she came up the path, that the cottage looked like just the place where stirring things might have happened in the past and might some day happen again.

On peeping in through the open door she saw that the loom had never been taken down and that even the weaver's great armchair still held its place before the fire. It seemed dark within, after the bright sunshine outside, but she could make out the figure of Roger Bardwell bending over the shoemak-

er's bench in the further corner of the room. His work lay unfinished on his knee and his face was buried in his hands. Utter weariness and despair spoke in his whole attitude. He sprang up quickly, however, when he heard her footstep and greeted her with his shy smile.

"Why, Mistress Margeret," he was beginning, when he was interrupted by the opening of the back door of the cottage and the abrupt entry of Samuel Skerry.

"So," said the shoemaker to Margeret, "you have an errand here? Then state it quickly, for ours are busy days and time means good money."

Dismayed at his harsh tone, Margeret quickly drew the heavy boots from under her arm.

"These are worn in the soles and are to be mended," she said. "My father says that —"

Skerry broke out in sudden anger as though he could not bear even the mention of Master Simon.

"A pest on you and your father!" he cried. "Do I not hear enough in the village of Master Simon this and Master Simon that, without having to see his own daughter coming to my house to tell me what I should do? Begone from my door and come not here again with your chattering and your tempting my boy into idleness."

Margeret made no delaying but turned at once to flee. Roger, however, followed her beyond the door and spoke hastily in an undertone.

"You must not mind the shoemaker's sharp words, little Mistress," he reassured her. "He seems indeed to bear ill will toward your father, but still I sometimes see him at our door, watching Mas-

ter Simon in his garden with a look so gentle, almost wistful, that I know not what to think. The boots shall be mended safely, and when they are done I will bring them back. I fear that the scant welcome you have received will make you desire little to come hither again."

"When he brings the boots," Margeret reflected, as she walked back through the field, "my father must question him and perhaps can find a way to help him."

It was just then the season for candle making, the task that Margeret loved above all others of the year. Beyond Master Simon's garden was a stretch of waste land reaching down to the water's edge, where grew in a thick tangle, the dark bayberry bushes that so many of the Puritans had thought best to root out of their fields. Master Simon, however, had kept his and had found that from their abundant fruit could be made the green, sweet-smelling tapers that were of such service through the long winter. Tallow was still scarce in the little Colony, and wax candles brought from England far too costly, so this was a brave discovery indeed. Every autumn when the first tang of frost was in the air, all the children of Hopewell gathered to pick Master Simon's bayberries and a merry task they made of it. Then, for days after, would come the sorting of the fruit, the boiling and skimming and the dipping of the wicks. Slowly the candles would take shape until the moment that was to Margeret a breathlessly exciting one when the first pair were placed in the copper candlesticks on the mantel and were lighted to see if all had been properly done

and the tapers burned clear, steady and fragrant as they should.

"I trust," said Mistress Radpath, as they began the first evening to sort and select the berries, "that this season our task may be completed in peace. Last year, do you remember, I slipped and hurt my arm so that you had to do the work with no help but my directions. And well indeed you did it!"

"And the year before," added Margeret, "neighbour Deborah Page was ill and you ran in and out between the boilings and skimmings trying to attend to her."

"Ay, so it goes," her mother said. "Some mishap each season all the way back to the year when your father was away among the Indians and we made the candles wondering whether he would ever come back to see them burn. But this year, surely all is peaceful and quiet and our task should be carried safely to its end."

Mistress Radpath spoke too soon for, as it proved, never before was a candle making season so full of disturbing and long-remembered events. To begin with, the very next day when the first kettleful of berries had just been swung over the fire, a mounted man stopped at the gate and came in to tell them that a cousin in the next town was taken with a fever and begged for help. So, with scarce half-an-hour's delay, Mistress Radpath went off, seated on the pillion behind the messenger and leaving Margeret to face the candle making alone.

She boiled and dipped and cooled with steady patience all of that day and the next until a great pile of straight smooth candles lay upon the kitchen

table. Master Simon came in just as the first two were lighted, and was loud in his praise of the tall, sweet-smelling flame.

"Will not my mother be pleased?" cried Margeret joyfully. "I can scarcely wait to show her how well the work has gone. See, here are little ones for lanterns and big ones to read by and a few great splendid tapers to burn if perchance the Governor should visit us again. And to-night you shall sit and read by these first ones while I sit by you and sew."

It had been a cool, clear October day, with vivid sunshine lying over the garden, but as Margeret went to the window to pull the curtains close she saw that the night promised to be stormy. It had grown dark early, big black clouds were rolling across such few stars as had sought to show themselves, and, even as she stood there, a patter of rain came against the glass.

"We will be so cosy here by the fire," she was saying, as she went to the next window, then, with a sudden exclamation, "Oh, look, look, Father; what can those lights mean?"

Master Simon came quickly to look over her shoulder. At the edge of the town moving lanterns were passing to and fro, with here and there the red flare of a pine-knot torch. Even as they watched more and more lights gathered and were carried back and forth in excited confusion while on the rising wind came the far-off sound of the town crier's bell.

"Oh, what can it be?" faltered Margeret. "Do you — do you think it could be the Quakers again?"

She could never forget the winter evening, now three years past, when two women of that forbidden faith had passed through the village and had sought to spend the night at Hopewell's little inn. They had been driven from the town and she, standing at the corner of the lane, had seen them fleeing with bent heads and upraised arms before the shower of stones hurled after them by the mob of angry Puritans. Master Simon had tried to stem the tide of his comrades' fury, but for once had not prevailed. She could still remember the look on his face as the crowd went surging by them and how he had turned upon his heel muttering, "How long, O Lord, how long?"

"How can they do it?" she had gasped, as she, too, turned from the terrifying sight. "There are good Neighbour Allen and Dame Page shouting curses and even the children are flinging stones!"

"They are afraid not to, my child," Master Simon had answered. "They dread the wrath of God should they suffer these women to remain here, and they think by this cruelty to save their own souls. It is so men are taught by the Gospel of Fear."

It seemed that it was again the Gospel of Fear that drove forth the men of Hopewell that night. The lights were moving in wide tossing circles, they were bobbing about in the fields like will-o'-the-wisps and were advancing closer and closer as they spread across the meadows.

"Father," Margeret cried wildly, "they are coming here!"

"It may be," said Master Simon at last, "that

some child is lost or some one is hurt. We had better go out to make sure that it is no such mischance as that."

The wind and rain blew hard in their faces as they went down the garden path so that Margeret had to cling to her father's arm to keep from losing him in the dark. The horn lantern in his hand winked and flickered but managed somehow to remain feebly alight as they struggled on against the storm. They had not gone far beyond the boundaries of their own land before they came upon a little group of searchers led by Goodman Allen. Their lights had all blown out and they were standing close together, their backs to the wind, trying, in breathless haste, to kindle a new flame.

"Here is Master Simon Radpath with his lantern still burning," exclaimed one in a tone of relief. "Now we can lose no time but lay hands upon that evil man at once. I am certain he is somewhere near."

"I had hoped that we would meet you sooner, Neighbour," said Goodman Allen. "It is not your wont to sit safe by the fire when Hopewell needs your help."

"That depends somewhat upon your trouble," answered Master Simon gravely. "Some matters I find are better managed without my aid. What is it now? Are some fleeing Quaker women threatening the safety of your souls again? Or is it a Baptist this time, one man against the whole of the village?"

"It is far worse than that," burst out the one who had spoken first, "worse than anything you can believe!"

"I thought there was naught worse than a Quaker," began Master Simon bitterly, but Allen interrupted him.

"The man whom we seek is a thousand times worse," he cried. "He is a Catholic priest, a Jesuit, and he has dared to live in the forest near us for years. He wandered southward from the Canadian settlements and came to dwell, miles from here it is true, but within the legal bounds of the Colony of Hopewell. He established a mission among the Indians, even built a woodland chapel and said his forbidden masses here, actually here in New England, upon Puritan soil! And the Indians, close-mouthed rascals, never betrayed him."

"And how have you found him out now?" inquired Master Simon. He seemed not so astonished as he should have been upon hearing this terrible tale. Perhaps his red-skinned friends had told more to him than to the other white men.

"He tried to slip down past the town and escape from our shores by sea. Somewhere in this darkness and storm a ship is cruising up and down waiting to carry him away. It seems that he desired to go back to France but was too old and broken to undertake the overland journey to Canada."

"Come, friend," put in another of the little party, nudging Allen as he spoke, in a vain attempt to check the story that he was pouring out. "We are delaying here and time is precious. Let Master Simon give us a light from his lantern."

"A moment first," said Margeret's father. "I must know who it was that found out all this."

"Who but the wisest and craftiest man in Hope-

well," answered Allen. "Who but that clever shoemaker, Samuel Skerry? The priest became bewildered in the dark and by some chance wandered to the cobbler's door. Roger Bardwell was from home and the shoemaker there alone, but it did not take him long to make the simple old Frenchman believe that he was a friend and so to draw the whole story from him. Then Skerry came in haste to rouse the town, but before we could return with him the priest had taken alarm and was off and away again. Now we are searching everywhere for him and when we find him —" He chanced to catch Margeret's horrified eyes fixed upon him in the lantern light and so concluded lamely, "It is no matter to be talked of before little maids."

"It is no work for honest men," rejoined Master Simon hotly, "to hunt a lost, frightened, old man up and down through the storm as though he were a wild thing. Have you no pity, Neighbour Allen, and no kindness of heart?"

"I have both," answered the other, "but I have also a soul, a soul that will be lost for all eternity should I suffer this priest to go unpunished."

Margeret started and was scarcely able to repress a cry. Something had brushed by her in the dark close to the hedge, something small and quick and panting.

"It is he, it is he!" cried the man nearest her. "I hear something rustling by the hedge. Your light, Master Simon, for the love of Heaven."

"Yes," said Master Simon.

The thin, flickering ray from his lantern swung across the wet wind-swept bushes nearer — and

nearer, and then suddenly went out, leaving them all groping in the blind darkness.

"Scatter quickly and feel your way along the hedge," cried Allen. "A plague on this tempest and the treachery of lanterns!"

Margeret felt her father's hand grasp hers firmly and draw her along the path that led back to their garden. Under cover of the dark they moved away from the searchers and walked silently up to the house. Once inside, Master Simon laid off his wet cloak and hung the offending lantern on its nail.

"You should have put in one of your new candles, Margeret," was all he said; "the old one was so nearly burnt out that it was not to be trusted in such a wind."

But he smiled a little as he spoke and she, for relief and joy at the priest's escape, laughed out loud. She went to the window to watch the winking lights again as they danced about in the meadow more confusedly than before. Finally, some new information seemed to have reached the searchers, for the bobbing lanterns moved closer together, turned in another direction, and passed so quickly that in a few moments the whole chase had gone over the hill to the northward.

"They have gone quite away," she exclaimed joyfully, but Master Simon made no reply. He was sitting in his big chair by the fire and gazing intently into the red flames. She went to stand by his side and stare at them too.

"Suppose he had found our door instead of Samuel Skerry's," she said at last, "would you have let him in?"

Her father came out of his brown study to answer her.

"The Puritan law inflicts heavy fines and imprisonment or worse," he said, "upon any one who harbours a Roman Catholic priest."

"But would you have let him in?" she persisted.

"I would have asked your consent first," he replied gravely, "for in the eyes of the law such a crime would be shared by all who were in the house that admitted him. And would you have dared to bring him in?"

"Yes, most surely," she answered. "I would have warmed and fed him, would have given him all I had to aid and comfort him and to send him safe upon his way. And so would you, as I well know."

"I think —" began Master Simon, and then stopped suddenly to listen.

Quick footsteps sounded on the grass behind the house, the back door was thrown open swiftly and without the ceremony of a knock. Upon the threshold stood Roger Bardwell, wet, panting and eager, his blue eyes no longer sad or troubled, but shining with excited purpose.

"Master Simon," he cried, although hardly above his breath, "and you, Mistress Margeret, do you dare to give aid to a man who needs your help so sorely that without it he must perish?"

"Yes," said Master Simon. "Is it the French priest?"

"Ay, it is the priest," Roger answered. "He is hiding in your garden."

CHAPTER V

BY CANDLELIGHT

WHEN, a moment later, Roger and Master Simon half helped, half carried the stranger through the door, Margeret's first feeling was a sinking of the heart and the despairing thought:

"Oh, if only my mother were here!"

But the next minute her courage rose again at the thought that here was a task to which, after all, she was quite equal and that at last had come a thrilling adventure in which she could have her own share. She went about the kitchen, mending the fire, setting the kettle to boil, bringing blankets to be heated and herbs to be brewed as steadily and gravely as though she were Mistress Radpath herself. But all the time her heart was beating loud with excitement rather than terror at the risk they were running. She caught Roger's eye once or twice and observed that under his grave demeanour he was as stirred at heart as she was. Here at last was the solution to his mystery, this was the friend that he had visited so often in the forest, it was this very escape through Hopewell that he had planned and worried over so many months.

It took much effort and all of Master Simon's skill to revive the exhausted guest, to quiet his shiv-

ering, to warm his trembling hands and bring a little colour back into his deathlike face. That he was old, Margeret had known from the talk in the field, but she had not been prepared to see any one so feeble, so small and shrunken, so bowed down with age and long hardship. He lay back unmoving in Master Simon's big chair, his thin, almost transparent hands resting limp and seemingly lifeless against the cushion.

At length, however, he stirred, opened his black eyes to look about him in wonder for a moment and, finally, he smiled and spoke.

"So it is that I am among friends," he said in his quaint French-flavoured English. "I, who have been hunted like a wild animal up and down your fields these three hours past. They are no respecters of old age and white hairs, these Puritan brothers of yours, Monsieur Simon."

"They know not any better," answered Master Simon briefly, "and since they have failed to find you we can forgive them."

"Yes, they failed, thanks to this brave friend of mine here," smiled the little priest, laying his hand upon Roger Bardwell's. "And I think it is thanks also to the high hedges of your garden that Puritan zeal and Puritan justice went by on the other side to-night."

His spirits seemed to revive quickly as the pleasant glow of the fire began to warm his chilled bones. Before an hour had passed he was sitting upright among the cushions and blankets telling, to three most eager listeners, tales of his life in the forest. Roger Bardwell was seated on the settle, warming

his cold hands at last and drying his rain-soaked clothes. He seemed a different boy now, with all the old trouble and misgiving put aside for the moment, since now his perilous affairs were in Master Simon's safe keeping.

"Yes," the little priest was saying, "it is not a life for those who love luxury and ease, but the Jesuit Fathers have long since learned to deny themselves both. Such toils and adventures as I knew when I was young have made it seem a little thing to dwell in the forest so near to your hostile Colony, yet with only my savage red-skinned children for company. Their need of me seemed to be so great that I have been led to remain with them, year after year, until old age and feebleness have made impossible my return to Canada. The great swamp between me and your village has stood me in good stead, for in all this time my hiding place has been undiscovered, and out of all the white settlers upon the coast, only two have ever wandered so far as my door."

"And who could those two have been?" inquired Master Simon.

"One was this dear, good lad here, Roger Bardwell, who strayed thither half dead with hunger and weariness and has been my helper and benefactor ever since. And the other — ah, what a strange fellow he was! The Indians brought him to me after that fearful winter storm some years since; they had found him wandering in the forest nearly crazed from starvation and exposure. He lay there in my hut for many weeks, always crying out that I should not come nigh him, that he would take no favours

from an infidel Papist's hands and that Heaven's vengeance would fall upon me did I not change my faith before it was too late."

Margeret stirred a little and looked up anxiously at her father. What was there so familiar in those last words?

"I had hopes at one time that he would live," the priest went on, "and night and day I tended him with all the skill I knew. I have often thought of what pain it must have been to him to be nursed by a Jesuit, whose very presence he believed would bring corruption. How he raved of the sins of the world and the fearful punishments that were to overtake the wicked! Ah, could he have lived, as I have, in the peace of the forest, ministering to the simple-hearted Indians, he might have learned that, after all, men know not so much of God as to be able to say freely who is to be condemned and who rewarded. He died, just as Spring was flooding the forest with new life and beauty, but he died as he had lived, still deeming the world a dark, wicked, bitter place. My Indians helped me to bury him under the pines, it was they that brought the white stone upon which we made shift to carve the name he had told us — Jeremiah Macrae. Some day, so I had thought, I would lie there by his side when my own task was laid down forever. I believe that he would not have minded that we should so sleep together through the ages, for I think that he knows by now that salvation is not so narrow and lonely a thing as he had thought, and has learned that a Puritan minister and a Jesuit priest may labour in God's work side by side."

"I would that all the world could see as clearly as you," said Master Simon, with a sigh.

"It will some day," answered the priest cheerfully. "Not in our time, brother, but at last. Few of my faith and few of yours think as do you and I, but the seed is sowing and the world will grow wise in Heaven's own good time."

There was silence for a space before the thin, gentle voice of the priest went on again.

"Shall I tell you, my friends," he said, "why it is not to be that I sleep beside Jeremiah Macrae in the forest and why I am at last laying the burden down and, if it be that I slip through the fingers of your Puritan brothers, will go back to die in my own dear country across the sea? It was but a little thing that in the end broke down my firmness, but when a man is old and weary it takes not much to call him home. I have never spoken before of what the true reason was, but I think that boy yonder knows."

Roger smiled.

"I believe it was the Nascomi Indian," he observed, "and the gift that he left you."

The little father nodded.

"It was in the same year as the coming of Monsieur Macrae that an Indian from a strange tribe passed that way and lingered with us a little. He left, when he went forward on his journey again, a faded yellow tulip whose petals had once been like burnished gold, just such a flower as used to grow in the garden near my first parish church in France. So long have I dwelt in the fierce wilderness that it seems only a dream when I think of that fair bright

country of mine. Yet it is a dream that stands often before my eyes, those close-built villages with their clustering red roofs and their smoke rising from a hundred neighbourly chimneys, those sun-bathed streets, narrow and crooked but, oh, so dear, and the great church towering over all as though to care for its children and protect them. Long, long I sat in the doorway the night after the Indian had gone, looking out into the moonlit forest, looking out toward France with tears in my foolish old eyes. The desires that I thought I had stilled forever awoke again and grew greater and greater until now I have but one thought, one longing, that fills my whole being. The Indians carried word of me back to my friends in Canada, through Roger Bardwell we arranged that the ship they would send was to take me on board near Hopewell. It was through my own impatience that the plan miscarried, for I would not wait for him in the place where he was to meet me in the forest, but pressed on, missed him in the dark and in my bewilderment sought his cottage and betrayed all to that crafty shoemaker who vowed he was my friend. For one thing only I can be thankful; it is that misgiving checked my foolish tongue in time and I did not tell of this boy's share in bringing me here. And oh, it cannot, it cannot be that after all this danger and effort of those I love, I am to lose my heart's desire and perish at the hands of the Puritans before I have seen France again!"

Master Simon rose and pushed back his chair.

"It cannot and it will not be," he said; "so be of good comfort and have no fear."

Roger also got up from the settle and went over to look from the window.

"The storm has blown itself out," he observed, "and there is a heavy fog rolling in from the sea. It is long past midnight and such of the men of Hopewell who have not given up the search in weariness have gone up over the hill. The French ship must be lying somewhere off-shore in this darkness: now is the time to try to signal to her from the shore if it is to be done in safety. Do you wait here, while I see what I can do."

"I will come with you," said Master Simon, taking down his lantern once more and putting in his pocket a handful of Margeret's bayberry candles. "We may have to go to the far end of the headland before the ship sees us and the time is none too long. And should any one knock at the door while we are gone, Margeret — well, the big cupboard upstairs is the safest hiding place. It must be your quick wit and courage that can avail to save us all in such a case."

The priest spoke very little after they had gone, and finally dropped into a doze in the big chair. Margeret looked at him many times as she tip-toed about the kitchen, looked at his white hair, his gentle wrinkled face and his thin shoulders bowed with toil and suffering. How was it possible that people of her own dear Hopewell could be seeking to take the life of such a man? Would the Gospel of Fear always have such a hold upon kindly people's hearts? She became so absorbed in her thoughts that she failed to hear an almost noiseless movement outside

and turned with a gasp of dismay when, without a sound, the door swung slowly open.

But it was not the Puritans who had found out where the hunted Jesuit was hiding that night. Margeret gave almost a sob of relief when she saw that it was a tall, blanketed Indian who had come in and that the faces filling the door behind him were all dusky ones, heavy, stolid and red of skin. The priest awoke and greeted the new-comers with a happy smile.

"These are my dear, dark children," he explained to her, "and they have followed to bid me a last good-bye."

Their faces lighted as he spoke to them and they responded in the thick gutturals of a tongue quite strange to Margeret. More and more came crowding into the firelit kitchen while a greater and greater company stood silent and patient outside. Their movements were so utterly without a sound that it was small wonder they had slipped, like unseen ghosts, past the searching white men.

They seemed to be asking something of the priest, for he shook his head distressfully again and again as one after another spoke. But the look that he turned to her now and again grew ever more wistful.

"Mademoiselle," he said at last, "these children of my faith are begging me to say the mass for them once more before I go. I have tried to refuse since it would bring greater danger upon you and your father, but, oh, it is hard to say no! Could it be that you would permit us to find some quiet corner of your

garden and there worship together before we part for all time?"

"Yes," she answered with no hesitation, "and were my father here I know that he would say the same. Do whatever you desire and — and take whatever you wish to use," she added vaguely, not quite knowing what this service was nor what it required.

"But that is truly brave and kind!" exclaimed the little priest, his face fairly shining with sudden joy. "It is not much that we will need, this table, if you will be so kind, and — and these?"

He laid his hands lovingly upon the great heap of candles that still lay upon the table and drew forth one of the tall thick tapers that was to have burned in honour of the Governor of the Colony.

"Yes, anything, everything," answered Margeret quickly, opening the cupboard where the candlesticks were kept.

The priest hesitated for a moment.

"It were better, Mademoiselle Margeret," he said, "that you go upstairs and try to neither see nor hear that which we are about to do, so that, if the story of this night ever becomes known, those of your faith cannot accuse you of worshipping with us."

Most unwillingly, yet realising the wisdom of his advice, Margeret went slowly up the stairs toward her own room, yet stopped to look out at the little uncurtained window under the roof. She saw that the storm was over, as Roger had said, and a heavy mist was spreading over the garden. Neither moon nor stars were to be seen, but the wind had dropped

and the night was breathlessly still. Down near the water's edge she could make out two moving points of light, Master Simon's lantern and Roger Bardwell's, signalling to the ship before the fog should hide them entirely. Over toward the town all was quiet and dark, since the search in this direction at least, had come to an end. She heard moving to and fro below her, the gentle opening and closing of the door; then the house became so silent that she could hear only the quiet crackling of the kitchen fire.

What were they doing out there in the garden? What was this Catholic mass of which she had heard men speak with bated breath as being seven and seventy times forbidden in the Puritan Colony? So far, she had been trying to bear her part in this adventure as though she were a grown woman, now she became all at once a little girl again and one consumed with curiosity. Forgetful of all consequences, she ran down the stairs, slipped out of the door and stole across the thick, wet grass. The mist had grown very heavy now but she could still see some paces in front of her.

From within the high dark hedges of that square enclosure that she and her father now called the Queen's Garden, there fell a gleam of soft, yellow light. Cautiously she stole nearer and nearer, peeped through the bushes and caught her breath at what she saw. The grassy space was crowded with Indians, a dense throng of kneeling worshippers, far too many ever to have found places within Master Simon's house. Their backs were toward her and their faces upturned toward the light that fell upon their glistening, coppery skins. The priest was

standing before them, his head was bowed and he was reading in an unknown language from a little book. Against the hedge behind him had been placed the table, covered with a white cloth and decked with such flowers and berries as were still to be found in the garden. And upon the table burned what seemed a myriad of bayberry candles, great ones and small, their broad, clear flames rising straight upward in the still air and giving forth a faint sweet perfume like incense. Their soft light fell like a benediction upon the strange scene, on the priest's white hair, on the dark faces of the Indians, on the wet shining leaves of the sheltering hedge.

She watched entranced and was hardly conscious of a movement at her side until she turned to see that Roger Bardwell had stolen close to her and was kneeling to look through the same opening between the branches. So absorbed was she that she did not in the least notice when he took off his homespun coat and put it about her shoulders to shield her from the chill air that foretold the coming dawn. The birds were beginning to chirp and sing in the forest and the blackness of the night was faintly changing to grey.

The priest finished his reading and turned to give the final blessing. Margeret, looking up at his worn white face, saw suddenly, beyond it, another that made her start back in terror. At a gap in the hedge behind the priest stood Samuel Skerry watching the forbidden ceremony with dark, eager little eyes. She gasped, looked again and saw only the empty place. Could she have imagined that ill-omened vision? She turned to question Roger but he had

been gazing down toward the sea and had seen nothing.

The Indians rose from their knees and went forward, one by one, to say farewell. Finally the last one slipped away; there remained behind only a boy who was putting out the candles and removing the flowers; the service was over. Master Simon came striding down the path and stopped at the edge of the Queen's Garden.

"Dear friend," said the priest, hurrying to him, "can you forgive that I have done this forbidden thing and brought such danger on you and your daughter and your garden? It has meant much, so much to those I must leave behind!"

"My forgiveness is not needed," Master Simon replied, "for you have done no wrong. But now the morning is at hand, a boat is waiting for you just off our beach and you must begone. Save for a fortunate chance that led the men of Hopewell to think that you had been seen on the northward road, you might have been discovered before this. But we must hasten now before the sun rises and this shielding fog is gone."

It took but little time to gather up the priest's few possessions and to guide him down to the landing place. He and Master Simon walked together across the garden, through the winding path among the bayberry thickets and over the rocks and sand to the water's edge. Margeret and Roger came behind, she at last finding time to put to him a score of questions concerning their strange guest. Had Roger really known the priest so many years and yet told no one? What sort of a house did he dwell in

there in the forest? How had Roger ever chanced to find it, and when?

"It was just before I came to Samuel Skerry's," the boy explained vaguely in answer to this last inquiry. "I was lost and in trouble and the little father gave me such help and comfort as I can never forget or repay."

"And you think he will be safe now?" Margeret pursued.

"Ay, safe enough," he answered, "if the ship once gets to sea. But it is of your danger and Master Simon's that I am thinking; only the most dire necessity could have led me to bring you into such a hazardous affair. And if it is really true that you saw the shoemaker watching through the hedge, there is no knowing what harm may come. I cannot but hope that in the mist and candlelight your eyes deceived you. I can never forgive myself if harm comes to you through this night's adventure."

"But you," questioned Margeret, "is not your peril greater than my father's or mine?"

Roger laughed shortly and bitterly.

"Until the Pilgrim Fathers learn to be more gentle to one of another faith than theirs," he said, "my danger is neither lessened nor increased by my friendship with this priest who dwelt in the wood."

They had reached the shore by now and had come up with the Jesuit and Master Simon who stood talking earnestly together as they waited on the beach. Through the fog came the sound of creaking rowlocks and the splash of oars approaching nearer and nearer. It was plain from the priest's words that he was overcome at the thought of what might happen

after his departure and was begging Master Simon to flee the danger completely and to leave Hopewell.

"You think not as these other Puritans do, good sir," he was saying. "You are ever in danger on account of their narrow laws and your wider views. Why not gather up your possessions and your family and seek some place where persecution is not so fierce and where a man can think and worship as he desires?"

Master Simon was silent a little before he spoke his answer, but his hesitation was not through doubt of what that answer should be.

"I have planted a garden here in the wilderness," he said slowly, at last, "and I must abide to see what sort of fruit it bears. I and my children and their children too, I trust, will tend it each in turn. And when we Englishmen turn our hands to the planting of such gardens we like not to abandon the task and leave others to destroy our work."

The priest seemed not to have grasped his meaning.

"But gardens grow in all lands, Monsieur," he protested. "Flowers bloom fairer in other soils than this of bleak New England. You can plant another garden across the sea."

"The flowers that I and my Puritan comrades have planted are not such as grow on other shores," Master Simon answered. "For we have planted truth, and a new freedom in a new land. There are weeds in our garden, I grant you, the weeds of jealousy and too-narrow justice and the Gospel of Fear. But where was there ever a new garden without weeds or a new country without mistakes and bitter

lessons that it must master before it comes to its glory at last. No, good friend, I have laid my hand to the plough nor will I look back!"

The prow of a ship's boat came suddenly out of the mist and grated on the beach. Two sailors leaped ashore to help the priest embark, cutting short his words of protest and farewell. A moment later the little craft had disappeared into the fog again and the muffled sound of the oars had died away. They could hear, a short space after, the creak of ropes and the rattle of an anchor-chain, while something big and grey, the ghostly shadow of a ship, slipped by through the mist that was beginning to be faintly bright with coming day.

The three conspirators walked homeward through the wet field and paused at the edge of the garden where Roger Bardwell made a stammering attempt at thanks for the help they had given to his friend. His broken words were cut short, however, by Margeret as she laid her hand upon her father's arm.

"Look!" she said.

The fog had lifted over the meadows showing them the sleeping town of Hopewell, every house with its doors closed and its windows blank as though drowsy with the same slumber that held those who slept within. But nearer than the village they could see Samuel Skerry's cottage, its door open and the casements standing wide while a plume of smoke rose steadily from the chimney. The glow of the dawn was reflected like fire from one of the windows that winked at them with its red light like some wicked, baleful eye. No matter who was asleep, the shoemaker was up and stirring.

"Now was he or was he not in the garden last night?" said Roger with a sigh of deep misgiving.

"There is little need to waste time in pondering over that question," returned Master Simon cheerily, "for if he was there we and all of Hopewell will know of it — and that right soon!"

CHAPTER VI

THE SCHOOLHOUSE LANE

FOR once it seemed that Master Simon was mistaken. It may have been that Samuel Skerry was really ignorant of what had occurred that early morning in the garden or it may have been that he had seen, and for some reason held his peace. Whichever was the truth, the matter remained long a mystery. Margeret was so certain that she had seen him spying upon them and so equally certain of his ill-will toward her father that she felt, for many slow-dragging, anxious weeks, that any day might bring his betrayal of their law-breaking. She waited a month, six months; then a year went by and another and another, but still the shoemaker did not speak. Had he forgotten? Had he never known?

All through the years that she was growing up, the thought was ever in her mind that he could bring ruin upon them at any moment he so desired. Once, as she stood at the edge of the village square, the town crier passed, bell in hand, announcing the trial and banishment of three Boston men for "giving succor and shelter to members of that dangerous and dissenting sect, the Baptists." Samuel Skerry, going by at that moment, turned upon her a leer of such evil import that she felt sure he had read her thoughts. If such was the punishment for giv-

ing help to Baptists, had been her reflection, would it not be, to the prejudiced eyes of Puritans, a hundred times worse to have aided a Roman Catholic? But time passed and still they dwelt in safety, for the shoemaker, so it seemed, was biding his time.

"Sometimes," said Roger Bardwell, who was a frequent visitor at their house now; "sometimes I think it may be regard for Master Simon that keeps him silent, sometimes I think that he was lost and bewildered in the storm that night as were the others, and so never saw the mass in the garden, sometimes I think that he is so wrapped up in money-getting that he has not a thought for other things. He is mad for gain these latter days, and he must have a fortune stored away in his hiding-hole behind the cupboard."

On the Sabbath day that Margeret was eighteen, she was still thinking, as she sat in the meeting-house, of the peril that had hung over them so long. Master Hapgood, the minister, was bringing to its close a sermon grown no shorter than of old, although age had bowed his shoulders and weakened his mighty voice. The pale yellow of a winter sunset showed for a few minutes behind the windows, gilded the blank white walls and faded away again. A dank chill crept over the meeting-house, children drew their feet up under them and men and women wrapped themselves closer in their grey cloaks.

"And now, brethren," Master Hapgood was saying, "there is time left for contribution, wherefore, as God has prospered you, so freely offer."

One by one the little congregation went forward, each to deposit his gift; first the Assistants, then the

Tything Men, then the humbler goodmen of the town. Some laid down money, more, such produce as they could spare, corn or fruit or fresh eggs. Samuel Skerry, shuffling down the aisle, brought as small a copper coin as the currency afforded and looked at it regretfully as he laid it down. Roger Bardwell, at the end of the line because he was the youngest of all the householders, brought a basket of dried corn of his own growing. He no longer dwelt with the shoemaker, but had built himself a little cottage and was coming to prosperity by tending fields of his own.

After the men had gone back to their seats there went forward those women who had no husbands or fathers or brothers there to carry the offering for them. Old Goody Parsons, limping and sighing, was still able to toil up the aisle with her contribution, a pair of stout knitted hose; behind her came Goodwife Page whose husband was away at sea. Last of all walked Margeret Radpath, slight, erect and fair, bringing her offering since there was no one to do it for her. How did she know, she who kept her eyes upon the ground as she went, that of the many glances that followed her, Roger Bardwell's was the most earnest gaze of all, never leaving her face even after she came back to sit alone upon the bench beneath the window?

And where were Master Simon and Mistress Radpath? Margeret's mother had died the year before, and slept now in the windswept grave-yard on the hillside, while Master Simon, upon whom old age had seemed to come overnight after his wife's death, sat at home, too worn and feeble to leave his own

fireside. His unbroken spirit, however, still shone warm and bright within him, and to his house still came all who were in need or trouble, to seek advice and help. Under his directions and by means of Margeret's busy hands and Roger Bardwell's, the garden still bloomed as fair as ever.

"'Tis the flowers have the best of us," Master Simon would say when now and then on summer days he could limp forth to see the rows of blossoms and the tall-growing shrubs. "The old age of a garden is fairer and lustier than its youth, and it comes to its greatest glory when tended by the children's children of the man who planted it."

Since Master Simon's fields must be tilled by other hands now, and their living therefore had grown less abundant, Margeret had become mistress at the little school, built beyond the meeting-house at the end of a winding lane. It was hard often for her to sit so many hours within doors, listening to the children droning away at their lessons, when she was so used to being in the fresh air the live-long day. She made a good school-mistress, nevertheless, as was proved by the lessons so well learned under her careful eye, although the bundle of birch rods, the former master's most familiar tool, lay upon its pegs above the door, so little used that a delicate spider web, spun between the tips of its twigs, had hung there the whole year through. The children came laughing and romping down the schoolhouse lane with many a tribute of flowers and red apples for the teacher they loved. One day, a pleasant, growing, Spring day, when she was most impatient to be outside, she had seen the little daughter of Goodwife Page, play-

ing with a long, dusty sunbeam that fell from the high window across her spelling-book. When the child looked up anxiously, fearing reproof, Margeret had only smiled in return and the little girl had gone happily back to her work.

"After all," Margeret thought, as she looked about her at the fresh, bright faces, "this is only another kind of a garden."

And often, on summer days, when the air was quiet and the children's voices filled the room with a busy humming like a hive of bees, she would think of the lives and characters that they were building up for themselves and remember Master Simon's line:

"The singing masons building roofs of gold."

There was some one else who came daily down the schoolhouse lane, and waited at the door for lessons to be over. Roger Bardwell, whether it rained or shone, was always there to walk home with the schoolmistress and to stay for a few minutes, chatting with Master Simon, when they reached her door. For a year he had been doing so, although the first day of it and the first look of welcome in his blue eyes when he met her coming up the lane, told Margeret that he loved her. But of this he had never spoken, nor ever broken the silence of that mystery as to who he was or whence he had come. What with this silence, and with her other anxieties, the girl had begun to carry a heavy heart as she went about her labours of the day.

Upon this Sabbath afternoon, as the service ended and the grave-faced congregation came out into the winter twilight, Roger Bardwell walked at her side

again, down the steep path where the snow creaked under their feet.

"Margeret," said he, "I have news for you that, I fear, threatens trouble."

"What is it?" she asked quickly, then voicing her first thought. "Does it concern my father?"

"Yes," he answered, "it concerns him and you and me. I believe that Samuel Skerry has made up his mind to speak at last."

"But after five years!" exclaimed Margeret. "Do you think that he could bring evil to my father now?"

"My thought is that he has given over the hope of harming Master Simon and wants only to strike at you and me. I have heard that he often says that the teaching of children is no work for women, that you should not be mistress of the school and that he could tell strange tales of you if he wished. He has brought up again the words of that mad Scotch minister who said that your father was a wicked man and that his garden would be laid waste for his sins. The shoemaker has much to say of me also, and with this last accusation seeks to ruin the two of us, at last."

Margeret wrung her hands in helpless anxiety.

"Are you sure of this, Roger?" she asked.

"This much I know," he told her. "On next Thursday, the market day, when all from the outlying houses will be in the village, he has urged the men to come up to the schoolhouse and see how their children are taught. Since you are the first woman to teach the school, he knows there are many who

are still uncertain whether a maid can rule their sons and daughters. But I think that is not the whole of the mischief that he is planning. I wish I had no need to tell you of this, Margeret."

The girl drew a long breath and then looked up at Roger with calm, grave eyes. People said that even more than in face and figure Margeret Radpath was beginning to resemble her father.

"We did no harm," she said quietly, "and we will take what comes."

She said nothing to Master Simon of the brewing trouble, and on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday went bravely up to the schoolhouse, trying not to think of what was to come. Thursday arrived, a day of lowering clouds, of sharp, bitter winds and flurries of snow. As the day passed, even the children seemed to feel a restlessness that grew greater and greater as the closing time came near. Even before the last hour was at an end, Roger Bardwell entered quietly and seated himself near the fireplace. A few minutes later there came a loud rap at the door. It opened to reveal Goodman Allen.

"I thought, Mistress Radpath," he said, shuffling awkwardly upon the threshold, "that I would stop here a moment and hear how that lad of mine is faring with his lessons."

"Yes, come in," said Margeret, "warm yourself by the fire and you shall hear your boy presently."

Before he could be seated, another man had followed him, naming the same errand, then another and another, until the room was crowded. Through the window, Margeret could see, with sinking heart, more and more dark figures hurrying through the

snow and down the schoolhouse lane. A tall, stolid-faced Indian, wrapped in his blanket, slipped in among the rest, but was noticed little, since curiosity often brought these warriors from the forest whenever they saw a crowd gather. Margeret, glancing at him hastily, had a vague feeling that his face was one she knew, but of that she could not be certain. Last of all the company, Samuel Skerry came in and stood, scowling, by the fireplace.

The winter darkness fell so early that the candles had to be lighted before the lessons were over. The children looked about, bewildered, at the rows of sober faces, but they stood nobly by their teacher, their dear Mistress Margeret, and spoke their learning manfully. Finally the hour struck, the bell rang, and school was over.

"And now," said Margeret, her spirit, after the long strain, flaring suddenly high in the face of that silent, waiting assemblage, "have you aught to say, my Masters?"

There was an embarrassed silence for a moment, broken at last by Skerry's harsh voice.

"I say," he began, "that a woman has no place as mistress of a school. Look yonder at the birch rods, brothers, how they gather dust and cobwebs. She never uses them, nor has she strength to do so if she would."

"Nay, sir," Goodman Allen interrupted mildly. "I have seen that when the birch is wielded too oft at school, it must also be used many times at home and, for myself, the task is one that I like not."

There was a murmur of laughter and assent.

"In my belief," added another, "a woman can

lead our lads and lasses better than a man and there is much other work for men to do."

"Then know this," cried Skerry, striding out into the center of the room while the children watched him in round-eyed wonder; "know that this woman has broken our laws and betrayed our faith, that she has given help and comfort to the Papist priest who for years lived hid in the forest, within the very bounds of our Colony. I myself saw him read his mass in the garden and saw his altar decked with the candles made by her hands. Shall our children be taught by one who is a friend of Popery?"

The crowd of men drew together and a buzz of wondering whispers began. Did the shoemaker really know? Could such a terrible accusation be true? Roger Bardwell stepped forth from among them and stood beside Margeret.

"Listen not to him, good people," he said. "Such wrong as Mistress Margeret may have done in the eyes of the law was accomplished innocently and when she was but a child. Whatever aid and comfort were given to the French father, that night he slipped through Hopewell and escaped to France, came through my fault. Lay the blame upon me."

"He can bear a good share of it," clamoured Skerry, his voice rising, along with his anger, "but the whole of it cannot be his. I saw them there together, worshipping with the Indians and the Jesuit priest, I saw them later talking to that outcast Papist in the garden, three of them, this maid, that boy, Roger Bardwell, and another — that precious Master Simon whom you all revere so much."

"What?" "No! Not Master Radpath!"

Cries of amazement and horror arose from the crowd. Surely not their idol, Master Simon!

"Ask them both if it be not true," cried the shoemaker, pressing his advantage home, "and ask this fellow further who he is and whence he came. Ask him if his father was not the most notorious enemy to religion in New England, who sat in the stocks in Plymouth and was imprisoned to await more serious punishment in Boston, whence he escaped, no man ever knew whither. Ask him, good sirs, and see him grow pale and hesitate."

That Roger grew pale was quite true but that he hesitated was not.

"It is as the shoemaker says," he declared bravely. "My father held views other than yours concerning certain matters of the church and he was bold enough not to hold his tongue. Although it chanced that I myself followed my dead mother's faith, which was the same as yours, good neighbours, I also fell under suspicion and was imprisoned with my father, but we both escaped. There was a ship just sailing from Boston whose captain was my father's friend and a kindly man. His was a little vessel but we managed to find a place of concealment in her hold, so that she put to sea with my father on board. When he was found they did not turn back but carried him safe to Holland."

"And why did you not go with him?" demanded Goodman Allen, bluntly.

For the first time Roger's voice faltered.

"There — there proved to be hiding place for but one," he said.

Although he spoke so low, there was not one of

that breathlessly attentive audience who did not hear. A low mutter of approval went around the room, for every stout-hearted Puritan there loved courage and high undaunted spirit.

"Speak on, boy," said Allen, "tell us how you came hither."

"I let my father think that I could find another place," Roger went on, "so that he did not discover, until too late, that I was left behind. I wandered from town to town, dwelt in the forest with the priest and the Indians for a space and at last came here and took service with the shoemaker. He cared not for differences of faith if he could have a helper whom he need not pay. I think he found and read a letter from my father and so learned who I was. That, men of Hopewell, is the whole of my tale."

For a fleeting minute it seemed that Roger's simply-told story had won forgiveness for both of the accused. But after a moment the tide of feeling turned. Free thinking, irregularity of doctrine, Popery — there were no other things that the Pilgrims feared so much. Famine and pestilence might be checked, but the fire of heresy, once lit among them, might burn until the peace of the whole Colony was destroyed. The men consulted, laid their heads together, whispered and then spoke louder and louder as their terror and excitement grew. Presently a clamour arose, led by Skerry's shrill voice:

"Destroy this evil! Drive them forth! Let no such danger lurk within our midst!"

It was fear, rather than anger that sounded in their voices, the deadly terror of that unconquerable enemy, free-thinking, so often beaten down but

always raising its head again. Men looked at each other with dread and suspicion in their eyes. What could be done in such a desperate pass, with the peril striking at their very midst? Naught, they seemed to think helplessly, save to raise a louder and more threatening tumult. Margeret, thinking of the Quaker women, shrank back as the clamouring throng moved a step forward. Roger threw his arm around her and turned defiantly to face them all.

Almost unnoticed the door had opened and some one had come pushing through the crowd. But a dead silence fell when Master Simon strode out into the room, his tall figure and white head bent, his grey cloak powdered with snow. Upon the breathless hush that followed the uproar, his quiet voice fell with a thrilling emphasis:

"Walk not in fear, ye men of God."

There was no word given in reply. The men stood motionless in their places as Master Simon went on:

"Why must you be so stricken with blind terror," he said, "when one amongst us takes a further step along that path to freedom that we ourselves have followed, that dares to think other than the rest of us? Is it reasonable that each one of us should say: 'I will believe as I choose and all men must think as I do'? Search your hearts truly and ask yourselves if there be not some point of doctrine, some order of worship that you have not questioned either once or many times. If there be one amongst you who has not so thought, let him stand forth that we may do him honour."

He paused, but no one stirred. With furtive side-

long glances, his listeners looked at each other, but not a man stepped forward. Master Simon's glowing eyes searched the faces of one after another.

"If then it be a wrong not to weave all our thoughts to the self-same pattern, are we not all sinners together? But thoughts are like running water, they go where they will and only our Father follows them and knows that they all flow down to the same sea. Trust Him who loves us much, and let Him guard our faith and us. And let it be that after our time people will say of us, not merely that we wore grey coats and never smiled, not that we walked a narrow way and persecuted our brethren, but let them say, 'They braved much, those Pilgrim fathers, they laboured valiantly, they trusted God, they planted a new spirit of freedom in this good New World, and they did well.'"

He ceased speaking and there was a pause, broken at last by Goodman Allen's long sigh of relief. The men moved, relaxed, smiled at each other and came forward to grasp Master Simon's hand. The danger was at an end.

"Margeret, child," said Master Simon, turning to his daughter, "do not look so anxious that I am here. Did you think to keep all this from your poor old father, who should stop at home now that age has bowed him down? No, I felt that I must speak to my comrades once more, and that this was a fitting time. I doubt if I have strength ever to step beyond my own doorstone again."

Amid the general hum of voices that followed now, Samuel Skerry's was lifted once more. The little shoemaker, apparently unmoved by Master Simon's

words, seemed determined still to attain his end.

"I ask again," he shouted in tones so loud that all were forced to listen; "I ask why that youth, Roger Bardwell, did not later follow his father beyond the seas, as he could well have done these three years past? Why does he still lurk here if it be not for some evil purpose of heresy?"

Goodman Allen looked at Roger and Margeret standing there together and laughed aloud.

"No eye but one so blinded with malice as is yours, Samuel Skerry," he said, "could fail to see why the lad has lingered here!"

Margeret blushed vividly, but Roger smiled upon them all. Now that the cloud over his past had been dispelled and his secret had been discovered and forgiven, he had no more need to hide his love. But the shoemaker was not yet silenced.

"Let him not deceive you," he insisted, "he —"

"Wait," cried Roger, holding up his hand, "before you denounce me, Samuel Skerry, think well. Remember that for one who harbours such a transgressor of the law as I was, there is a fine of forty shillings for each hour spent by the sinner in that man's house. Think, my good master, how long I dwelt with you, how many hours of toil I spent tending your field, drawing your water, mending your rows of broken shoes. Count up what your fine would be and whether there is enough to pay it in that strong-box of yours behind the —"

"Cease," screamed Skerry in sudden panic. His terror was so plain that Roger relented and the listeners roared with laughter. The shoemaker began to look about him uneasily and to sidle toward

the door. This meeting that he had called together for the ruin of his enemies had become suddenly no happy place for him. One or two of the younger men began to crowd him into a corner whence he could not escape, the anger in their eyes boding ill for the mischief-making cobbler. But Master Simon interfered.

"No, no, lads," he said. "Wherefore humiliate him further? The matter is at an end so here let it rest."

It was an odd look, half gratitude and half baffled fury, that Samuel Skerry bent upon them as he slipped away. As Master Simon stood looking after him, some one brushed against his arm. It was the Indian whose entrance Margeret had noticed earlier in the afternoon. She recognised him suddenly now as the one who had led the band of his comrades when they came to say good-bye to the priest. With silent dignity he stepped forth, wrapped in his blanket, his black eyes shining in the candlelight.

"There is one more word to be said in this affair of Monsieur Simon," he began, "and that word is mine."

His English was good, but had, beside his own guttural accent, a foreign flavour as though he had been taught by one whose native tongue was French.

"Speak on, friend," said Goodman Allen, as the men drew back to give him space.

"I, too, was a friend of that French father who dwelt in the wood," he pursued. "He led me to the Christian faith and taught me to walk in upright ways. I and my comrades, we loved him dearly,

we loved Monsieur Simon too for the help that he gave. And we love also that garden of his, the spot where we worshipped together and said our last farewell. Our little father is dead now, dead in his own happy France and we know that he sleeps the quieter for knowing of that last mass we said together."

A slight noise of the door's opening and closing caused no interruption. Samuel Skerry had stolen out into the dark, but he went unheeded, so intent were the men upon what the Indian had to say.

"Of late," the tale continued, "a secret word has come from the settlements in Canada, a message that has been passed on from tribe to tribe. The French love not the English and have been stirring up the Indians to strike at the New England settlers, to destroy their towns where they can, and to cut off the outlying farms. You have heard of such deeds all about you: you knew that they were ordered by the French but do you know why you have been spared? It was because we who loved Monsieur Simon would not listen to evil counsel, because that garden of his has become, for us, a sacred spot, because when danger threatened, we ringed you round and held you safe. The English Puritans are great and powerful, but it is well for them, nevertheless, to have the wandering Jesuits and the humble red men for their friends."

In awed silence the men of Hopewell had heard him to the end. Then arose suddenly a tumult of voices, not the outcry of fear and anger such as had been heard half an hour before, but a thunder of joyful admiration and cries of:

"God bless our Master Simon and his garden!"

A lane opened in the crowd through which Master Simon passed, leaning upon the Indian's arm. In little groups, by twos and threes, the village men and their children followed, talking excitedly as they went. Margeret lingered to cover the fire and snuff the candles, while Roger Bardwell, to no one's surprise, waited also. Goodman Allen, leading his little boy by the hand, was the last to go. He turned at the door.

"You two have weighty matters of which to talk," he said with his honest, kindly smile. "So trouble not, Mistress Margeret, I will see that your father comes safe to his home. You, and this youth who has so much to say to you, need not to hasten as you walk through the lane!"

CHAPTER VII

GOODY PARSONS ON GUARD

EVERYBODY in Hopewell was bidden to Margeret Radpath's wedding, and everybody was bound to come, of that one could be quite certain. All the village housewives, as soon as the day was finally set, fell to rubbing shoe-buckles, polishing silver buttons, getting out their finest white kerchiefs and looking to their husbands' best Sabbath clothes. Many of those stout grey coats had been worn to the marriages of a generation before, but were only the more respected for that reason. Every kitchen was fragrant with baking, for there was no person who did not wish to send an offering to the wedding feast of Master Simon's daughter. There were other gifts, too, of every sort and shape, from the great, chased, silver cup sent by the Governor down to little Jonathan Allen's laboriously whittled birch broom. When Margeret or Roger walked up the street of Hopewell, men and women would lean out through the open half doors of their cottages and cry, "Good wishes to you, Mistress Radpath," or, "Good luck and long happiness, Master Bardwell," so that the whole air seemed to be filled with the pleasant sunshine of friendly hopes and cheery blessings.

More than a year had passed since that winter

evening in the schoolhouse lane, but Margeret and Roger had waited patiently until all could be set in order for their marriage. With his quick shrewdness, Roger had seized upon a fact that was, later, clear enough to every one, namely, as he told Master Simon, "that New England's prosperity would come more from her ship-captains than her farmers." So he had sailed away upon a trading venture in a ship of which he hoped some day to be the owner, while Margeret had sat by the fireside at home, spinning flax, weaving linen, and stitching away at the household gear that must belong to every properly dowered bride. Master Simon, sitting in his great chair opposite, would beguile her with stories of the foreign lands to which Roger had gone, tales brought back by his own father from voyages made nearly a hundred years ago. Then at last the ship had come to port again, the final stitch had been taken and the marriage day was at hand.

The time of the wedding was late June and the place, as all agreed to be most fitting, was Master Simon's garden. For weeks Margeret's father had been directing two busy helpers there, since his own stiff joints were not equal to their old tasks. With patience and skill that were almost uncanny he had brought the garden to its fairest flowering. Early blossoms he had coaxed into lingering, late ones to hasten their bloom, so that, as the day approached, the whole place was a miracle of abundant pink and white, banks of roses against cool dark hedges, smooth lawns fringed with fragrant pinks, sweetbrier, tall trim hollyhocks, masses of white syringa and early-flowering sweet-william.

"There is one thing that troubles me," said Master Simon to his daughter and to the lad he already loved as well as a son, "one plant that mars the pink and white harmony of the garden. There is a clump of sweet-william that should have bloomed white, but instead, has opened its flowers a brilliant crimson. So eagerly has it answered my call to grow abundantly for your wedding day that I scarcely can bring myself to root it up, poor faithful thing. I fear that I am too soft-hearted to be a proper gardener!"

He leaned forward in his chair that had been set near the cottage door, and tried to point out the flower that had played him false. It could not be seen, however, from where he sat, so Margeret and Roger went down into the garden to look for themselves. Neither of them could summon courage to pull up the too-willing plant, so it was left to bloom unabashed, among the softer colours of the other flowers. The next day, just at sundown, the marriage was to take place, in the little square Queen's Garden where the last level rays always fell in a farewell radiance. Later, the wedding supper would be spread indoors, and for this great preparations had been made, the larder filled with good things, and rows of bayberry candles set ready to light the scene.

One or two last errands remained to be done, and for these Margeret and Roger were setting forth together. It was a clear June night with thick-sprinkled stars, shining serenely as though to say, "Never fear, to-morrow will be as full of sunshine as the heart of a bride could wish."

At the gate the two met a visitor, Goody Parsons,

leaning on her cane and moving slowly, but still not too old and stiff to come with her good wishes and a wedding gift.

"Let me not keep you," she said as they stopped and would have turned back. "I will set that which I have brought within, and abide with Master Simon until you return. I have heard much of the glory of this garden made ready for your wedding, Mistress Margeret, and I can take my time at seeing the flowers while you are gone. Nay, I will not step inside the gate until you go forth; I have no wish to keep you from your errand."

So Margeret and Roger continued on their way up the lane while Goody Parsons limped across the grass toward the house.

"She has come on another mission, too," Margeret told Roger, "for she told me some days since, that my marriage would not be lucky if I neglected to tell the bees of my wedding day. She was a wonderful bee-mistress once, so people say, and she has told me many a charm and spell to bring honey to the hive. When I said that telling the bees was mere superstition she was greatly troubled, and she has, I think, toiled hither to do it for me and is glad that we should be away."

Goody Parsons had indeed come upon just that errand, yet first she hobbled into the kitchen where she set down her wedding gift. A blue and white china teapot it was, that had voyaged across the sea from England and was a rare and precious thing in Hopewell, where nearly every one must still use wood or metal or rough earthenware for household

utensils. It had long been the old woman's most valued treasure.

"There is not a great time left for me to use it," she said in answer to Master Simon's remonstrances, "and who should I wish to have it after me rather than my dear Mistress Margeret?"

She freed it from its wrappings and set it upon the table with a smile of happy pride.

"Now," she added, "I am going out-of-doors for a little. No, sit you here, good friend, what I wish most is to go alone."

She stepped forth into the garden, a dim fragrant place full of black shadows, but beginning to be faintly lit by a rising moon. Slowly she moved up and down the paths, laying her gnarled old fingers lovingly upon the roses and syringas. She broke off a twig of the hawthorn and tucked it into the bosom of her threadbare gown.

"Eh, it is many a long year," she said, "since I walked in the lanes of Hertfordshire before my marriage day and thought the world was abloom for me alone. Yet it might have been yesterday save for the memory of him who has been so long dead."

She rested at last upon the bench under the linden tree, dreaming of the never-to-be-forgotten beauty of that still June evening in England, fifty years ago.

"But who can call it so far gone by," she said to herself at last, "when the same rose that I plucked that night from the vine on the cottage wall, still blooms beside my doorstep here in the New World. It is a good God that gives us the flowers to hold our youth and old age together."

She sat for some little time, her chin upon her hand, looking across the banks of white flowers and sniffing at the fragrance that filled the warm air, but finally rose with a determined mien.

"I sit dreaming here like a foolish old crone," she muttered, "and forget my errand so that those two young things will be coming back to laugh at me and my old-fashioned ways. Ah, but I mind how my mother stood in the bright Spring sunshine and told the bees of my wedding day, while Jock Parsons and I sat laughing upon the doorstep and said it was no use. That is the way of youth!"

As she was walking across the grass toward the row of beehives under the apple trees, her attention was attracted by a little twinkling light that shone out from Samuel Skerry's cottage. She stood a moment to watch it idly and then became aware that it was moving toward her, jerking and halting, it was true, but passing very slowly down the path toward the gap in the hedge.

"Now what can the rascal have on foot?" she questioned. "Nothing good, for that I will answer."

The light came through the hedge and advanced slowly up through the garden. She could see Samuel Skerry now, leaning over as he shuffled along, carrying a candle in one hand and something heavy and awkward in the other. Presently he paused, set his burden down and turning, hurried back the way he had come. Consumed with curiosity, Goody Parsons hobbled forward as fast as she could to see what he had left.

"I would give my best new bonnet," she told her-

self, " the one I bought seven years ago last Michaelmas, to know what the villian is about! "

What he had left proved to be a big iron pot, filled with hot liquid that still bubbled and steamed. Goody Parsons dipped in an inquisitive forefinger and tasted it.

" Salt," she exclaimed, " hot salt water! "

She was still marvelling over this new mystery when she observed that Skerry was returning, and retreated hastily to the shelter of the apple tree. He was carrying a second pot, bigger and heavier than the first, which he set down with a grunt of relief.

" Now," she heard him mutter, " we will see what we can do for Master Simon and his precious garden."

He had blown out the candle so that she could scarcely see what he was about, but a sudden swish and splash of hastily poured out water gave her a notion of his evil purpose.

" Samuel Skerry," she shrieked, hobbling toward him and holding up a shaking hand; " Samuel Skerry, what are you doing? "

The startled shoemaker jerked himself backward and dropped what he was holding in his hand. The object rolled to the old woman's feet and she bent stiffly to pick it up. It was a big pewter bowl, wrought with raised figures and flowers, as she could feel in the dark. Evidently he had brought it as the most convenient receptacle for dipping out the brine. Utterly bewildered she turned it round and round in her hands and asked again in a trembling voice:

"What are you doing?"

"I am watering Master Simon's garden," the shoemaker answered with a mocking chuckle. "I am giving to those plants he pets and cherishes a drink of scalding salt water, so that to-morrow, when the bride comes forth, she will find a desert for her marriage place and every flower perished never to grow again. Give back my bowl ere I take it from you."

"I did not know," she gasped, "that living man could be so evil!"

"You know it now, then," he snarled, "and you know how I hate Master Simon and his goodness and his garden. You can say farewell to the flowers, for this night will see their ruin."

"It shall not," she cried. "No one shall dare lay hand upon leaf or flower that belongs to him. The good that has been wrought here comes not so easily to an end."

In spite of her determined words, however, she was shaking with terror and retreating before him as he advanced threateningly. In stepping back she brushed smartly against the edge of the nearest bee-hive and heard a faint murmur from the bees within. The shoemaker had come quite close.

"How will you stop me?" he jeered. "Will you call Master Simon, who cannot leave his chair? Or will you restrain me yourself, you, an old woman who can only limp and groan as she walks along? No, Master Simon's garden has come to the end of its glory. Do you remember what the Scotch minister said?"

"And you," cried the old woman scornfully, "you

are the instrument of Providence, I suppose, chosen to carry out the preacher's words! People said when he vanished that he had gone back to the Devil, his master; perhaps you are his servant left behind to continue his work. Hark you, Samuel Skerry, if you dare to destroy good Master Simon's garden, you will have to reckon with the people of Hopewell. I verily believe that they would burn down your house, should you do such a deed."

"Cease your old woman's chatter," he ordered sharply. "I fear the people of Hopewell just as little as I do you. There is no power on earth can stop me now."

"And is there not?" cried out Goody, shrilly. She struck her hand against the hive and a loud buzzing arose from the angered bees. "Do you hear those voices from within, cobbler Skerry? Do you understand that even a feeble old woman may have helpers near by? Should I raise the lid of the hive, out they will come, a thousand assistants ready to my hand. They will not harm a bee-mistress who has worked with them until they know her, but will they be as kind to you, Samuel Skerry? Can you call even so small a creature as a bee your friend?"

The shoemaker drew back, somewhat daunted for a moment. Then possessed by a gust of fury, he sprang to his great kettle and began pouring the hot brine over the nearest flowers.

"I have warned you," cried the old woman, and she flung open the top of the hive.

A dark, whirring mass of bees came swarming out on the instant. Goody Parsons drew back, but there was no need, the line of their flight was straight

toward the stooping shoemaker. He hesitated, turned, then clapped one hand to the back of his neck and the other against a smarting knee. Then, with a howl of rage, he made off through the garden, the buzzing cloud of enemies pursuing him even to his cottage door. Goody Parsons chuckled as she saw him go, but it was with shaking hands that she closed the hive.

"May Heaven grant that Master Simon's garden be never in such danger again!" was her quiet prayer.

When Margeret and Roger returned an hour later, the old woman was sitting quietly by the kitchen fireplace, rubbing the pewter bowl until it shone in the candle light. Margeret, seeing the blue and white teapot on the table, was full of joyful but protesting gratitude over receiving such a gift. But Goody would listen to none of her remonstrances.

"My children are all married and dwell in England," she said, "and the old teapot will never cross the seas again, so it is you that must have it, and with an old woman's blessing, too, my dearie."

The girl flung her arms about her old friend's neck and kissed her with such energy that the pewter bowl rolled from her lap.

"Why, what is this?" exclaimed Roger, stooping to catch it as it trundled across the floor.

"Oh, that," said Goody Parsons, "is a wedding gift that was left here for you an hour since. Samuel Skerry brought it, but he is a modest man and would not wait to receive your thanks."

If ever bright skies and sunny weather combined

to make a perfect wedding day, they did so on the afternoon that Margeret Radpath was married. And if ever happy hearts and loving good wishes made the day so bright that sun and flowers were not needed, they did so at the wedding in Master Simon's garden. Tall, fair and fragrant the flowers stood in their unbroken rows, only the crimson sweet-william had perished under the shoemaker's hands. Margeret's father had heard the tale of Samuel Skerry's misdoing, but had begged Goody Parsons to say nothing of it as he feared that the wrath of the people would be great. But the old woman's tongue, given by nature to gossiping, could not quite keep silence now.

The marriage feast was over, the bride had kissed her father good-bye and had set forth with Roger Bardwell to his little cottage, three fields away. They were followed by the wedding guests in gay procession, carrying flowers and wreaths as was the simple, friendly custom in Hopewell. For a month the two were to live out their honeymoon in the little house a stone's throw from Master Simon's door, and after that Margeret was to bide with her father or he with her, while Roger went to sea again. On the threshold they turned to listen to the last good wishes and blessings of their friends.

"Look well to her happiness, young master," cried a voice from the crowd, "for she is our Master Simon's daughter."

"I will," returned Roger, "as well as any man can, save only Master Simon himself."

It was not until the people were back in their own houses, taking off their best cloaks and hanging up

their Sabbath coats, that the rumour began to run up one street and down another that Samuel Skerry had sought to destroy Master Simon's garden. Many could not conceive that Master Radpath had such an enemy in the world, but more were willing to believe in any iniquity of the little evil-eyed shoemaker's. Early the next morning a crowd of men with stern determined faces, came tramping down the lane and across the field to Skerry's cottage. What they had in mind, perhaps even they themselves did not know, but more than one had reached down his old blunderbuss from above the fireplace where it had hung undisturbed ever since the Indian peace began, and all the faces were dark with anger. But their plans, whatever they were, could never be carried out, for the door of the shoemaker's cottage stood open, the rooms lay empty and the ashes, cold on the hearth, and Samuel Skerry was gone.

There was only one living person who had seen his departure. Margeret Bardwell — Margeret Radpath she was no longer — had been up and stirring at dawn of this first day of her married life. Through her kitchen window, she had seen the little shoemaker's bent figure go up the path, his shoulders bowed by the burden upon his back. Something in his quick, stealthy movements made her realise that it was not a simple errand that had brought him forth so early, but that this was flight from Hopewell — perhaps forever. Was he really going, and the shadow of his ill-will to be taken from her life for all time?

She felt a great lightening of the heart and then, a moment after, a sudden haunting, disturbing mem-

ory. It was only because his bent, black figure reminded her of another that, so long ago, she had watched go up the same path and vanish over the hill. For a fleeting second, as she watched Samuel Skerry go, there came back a clutching remembrance of Jeremiah Macrae and there rang in her ears that ominous prophecy concerning Master Simon's garden:

"Fire and sword shall waste this place, blood shall be spilled upon its soil, and those who come after you shall walk, mourning, among its desolate paths."

But the memory passed as quickly as it came, and, with a long sigh of relief, she saw the crooked little figure disappear at the turn of the lane.

PART II
STEPHEN

CHAPTER VIII

A TALE OF WITCHES

MASTER SIMON'S farseeing eyes had certainly deserved the truth when he said that a garden only came to its own when tended by the children's children of the man who planted it. Fair as were the flowers and shrubs in his own time, they grew steadily more beautiful as the years passed, until people of Hopewell would always bring their visitors from afar to see such glories of leaf and blossom. Long after Master Simon had slipped away to walk in the brighter garden of Paradise, long after the place belonged to Margaret and then to her children, the villagers would still speak of it as Master Simon's Garden.

The hawthorn bush that had come from England as a tiny sprig and that had been just tall enough to shade Margaret as she sat on the grass playing with her dolls, was when her children came to frolic about it, a great round tower of thorny strength where they could play king-of-the-castle to their heart's content. The hedges about the Queen's Garden, when Margaret's daughter, Alisoun, was eighteen, were so high above the girl's golden-brown head that her finger-tips could scarcely touch the top. And by the time Alisoun herself was married to Master Gilbert Sheffield and had children of her own,

the big, over-hanging, linden tree had grown to resemble a whole forest of slender trunks springing from one root, and sending forth, in June, such clouds of fragrance that people passing in the lane outside would stop to sniff and smile. The trailing roses, also, had grown thick and close about the sundial, nearly hiding the words that Master Simon had carved there so long ago.

The level sunshine of a late summer afternoon was slanting across the rows of blooming flowers and shining like a halo behind Alisoun Sheffield's bent head as she sat under the linden tree with her children about her. It was just so that Margeret Radpath had sat with her father to hear the story that had to do with Master William Shakespeare and good Queen Bess and the steadfast courage of Robin Radpath, Master Simon's father. Quite as attentive as Margeret had been, were those who listened today, Anna, the daughter nearly grown, Elizabeth, many years younger and Stephen, youngest and most eagerly interested of all. The same tale was telling now and added to it were accounts of Master Simon's far journey among the Indians, of the coming of the Jesuit priest and of the stormy meeting in the little school house when Master Simon walked abroad for the last time. Alisoun Sheffield had also a story to tell of her own youth and of that perilous season when the last flood of terror of the Gospel of Fear swept over the land and the cry of "Witches! Witches!" resounded throughout New England. At that time men and women everywhere were accused of dabbling in the black arts and were dragged to trial just as had been the free-thinkers and dis-

senters of an earlier generation. Neighbour began to regard neighbour with suspicion and the question, "What is to become of us?" was the one thought in every frightened heart.

Alisoun and Margeret Bardwell, so Alisoun told the tale, were working in the garden on just such a sunny summer day as this, when there came running through the gate young Amos Bardwell, Alisoun's nephew, who dwelt with them and was the greatest mischief-maker in Hopewell. His mouth and eyes were round with wonder, his yellow hair was ruffled and full, strange to say, of dust and cobwebs.

"Oh, oh," he cried. "What do you think? They have taken old Mother Garford for a witch; there is a whole crowd of men shouting and praying and of women pretending they cannot bear to look but hurrying after just the same, and they are bringing her up to the jail. She is weeping and crying for mercy but nobody listens. Come quick, both of you, I am going back to watch again."

"Stop, Amos." Never had Alisoun heard her mother's voice sound so tense or so stern. "Now tell me all of this matter and — wait, how in the world came these cobwebs in your hair?"

The boy hung his head. His excited enthusiasm seemed suddenly to have fled from him.

"Richard and Thomas Porter and I," he explained slowly, "we could not see the witch's face for the crowd, since all were so tall and we so little. So Richard said he knew a famous way and showed us how to get into the jail before the others came, and how to climb up upon a beam in the public corridor

so that we could see her plain as she passed below. But the wood was rotten and just as we were settled it gave a great crack, so down we scrambled in a hurry, I can tell you, lest it fall with us. We slipped out before any one found us and the crowd, coming in, passed so close that we saw the witch after all. I think the beam must have fallen in the end, for later we heard a great crash within and a cry went up from all the people. Oh, but you should have seen the witch, she looked —"

"That is enough," said Margeret, stopping him abruptly. "She looked as would any old woman who was frightened and in trouble. Suppose I were to be dragged to prison for a witch, Amos?"

"You — you a witch!" The little boy cried out in horror at the very thought.

"As much a witch as old Mother Garford," returned Margeret, "and so, since she has ever been a good friend to us, we must go up to the meeting house to-morrow and testify in her behalf."

For such an errand Amos was willing enough; it was Alisoun who hung back, trembling and tearful. It was revealed that she and her friend, Cynthia Turner, had gone to Mother Garford some weeks before, to buy a love charm, just as had so many of the other maids of Hopewell long before the rumours of witchcraft arose. Cynthia had wished to make more certain of the heart of Hugh Atherton, the lad who was studying at Harvard College to be a minister, while Alisoun wished to assure the safe return of the young ship's captain, Gilbert Sheffield, from his long voyage to the West Indies. The charm, in her eyes, had proved to have no magic

power whatever, so she had nearly forgotten the whole matter.

"It may be," said Margeret, when she had heard her daughter's confession, "that by telling your story before the people you can prove that Mother Garford's spells are of an innocent kind and so can clear her. Can you do that, my child?"

"Oh, no, mother! Oh, no, no!" cried Alisoun wildly. "To stand up before them all and confess that I bought a charm to bring Gilbert Sheffield safe home? Oh, never, never! You will not make me, mother?"

"No, I will not force you," said Margeret, "but shall an old woman die disgraced for want of a word to save her when that word can be spoken, even at the cost of pain and humiliation? Go down into the garden and take counsel with yourself. You shall act in the matter only as you choose."

Margeret went into the house, taking Amos with her, and left Alisoun to make her decision alone. There, as the dusk fell, she walked among the flowers, back and forth through the calm, quiet, sweet-smelling garden. Here dwelt the memory of Master Simon, of all the good that he had done and of the courage of her own father and mother in those stirring early days. Could she follow them, could she dare to be as brave as they?

She was in the garden a long, long time; so long that the stars had come out when she went in at last, and a black silent bat flitted past her as she stood on the doorstep. She found that Margeret had put the excited Amos to bed and was singing him to sleep.

"I will do it, mother," she said simply. Margeret kissed her and answered quietly,

"I thought that you would!"

And for that night the matter was laid to rest.

The public examination of Mother Garford was to be held at the meeting-house next morning, at such an early hour that many of the people on the outlying farms must tumble out of their beds long before sun-up if they were to be there in time to get good places and hear every word that passed.

"If this foul witch be disposed of quickly," they said to one another piously, "it may be that the good Lord will see our right intentions and not visit us with another."

It was, therefore, the idea of all of Hopewell that Mother Garford should be condemned at once. That there was doubt of her guilt was a thought that had not entered the mind of any one in that hurrying crowd.

As Alisoun and her mother crossed the garden on their way up to the meeting-house with Amos running impatiently on ahead, the girl hung back to take one last look at the flowers in all their beauty and brightness on that radiant Spring morning. It seemed to her scarcely possible that she could go through the ordeal before her, or ever come back to be lighthearted and happy in that dear place again. Although the blue May sky was without a cloud, the very sunshine seemed cold and dull as though the terror of her shy, shrinking spirit had cast a blight over everything.

As she looked down the hillside toward the shining bay she saw suddenly a white sail rise above the

headland and, standing breathless with hope and fear, she watched a great vessel round the point, turn slowly and, with all its high-towering sails set to catch the light wind, stand in toward the wharf. Alisoun could not mistake that tall bow and broad, heavy stern. It was the *Margeret,* one of her father's ships, home from the West Indies and bringing Gilbert Sheffield to be another witness of what she must do that day.

When they reached the meeting-house, the doors were only just being unlocked, but already the space at the foot of the steps was packed and breathless. Their little party would never have been able to come near the stairs leading up to the entrance had not Margeret, who was esteemed as a great person in the village, been granted room by those who stood in the way. By squeezing and slipping in and out, the three managed finally to make their way close up to the foot of the stairs. Above them stood the magistrates, the chief men of the church and a stranger, all waiting for the doors to open. The newcomer was a tall man with greyish hair, stooped shoulders and a deeply lined face; he wore a rusty black coat whose pockets bulged with papers. This, as every one knew, was the great Master Cotton Mather, the famous minister, who knew more of witches and their evil ways than did any other living man. It was a great honour that he had come to Hopewell to save them in their danger and to help in the trial and conviction of their witch.

The chief magistrate had, with some difficulty, drawn the big iron key from his coat-tail pocket and was inserting it in the lock. Mother Garford, weep-

ing and trembling was being half led, half dragged up the stairs by a self-important bailiff. Every head turned in startled surprise when, of a sudden, a voice cried to the magistrate to stop.

Margeret Bardwell had pushed her way through the crowd and was standing on the stairs below them. She was speaking in a clear, steady voice that carried to the ears of all the waiting people.

"Hold," she cried. "Before we desecrate our meeting house with the trial of an innocent old woman who is no more of a witch than you or I, you must hear what we three Bardwells have to say. I would that there were four of us, and that my husband, who has gone to sea, were here to stand by me, but as it is you must pause in your folly and listen to a woman."

"What — what — what?" exclaimed the magistrate. "Who is it dares to speak thus? Oh — Mistress Bardwell, perhaps I heard amiss. It cannot be that you defend this woman!"

Wonder and consternation became visible on every upturned face, only Master Cotton Mather remained unmoved.

"It is well known," he pronounced in his slow, precise tones, "that in many cases witches and sorcerers are able to bewitch others into speaking in their favour against all sense and reason. So it must be with this poor lady, but yet we will hear her."

"I wish to say," continued Margeret, "that there is no real evidence against Mother Garford, none but that which your own foolish fears have conjured up."

"You are wrong there, Mistress," interrupted one

of the Tything Men quickly, " there have been many suspicious signs and portents such as no God-fearing person can deny. Mother Garford has looked with an evil eye upon many a man or woman and many a house in this town, after which misfortune has followed quickly. Did not Dame Allen's baby cry itself into convulsions only an hour after the witch's shadow had passed the door, and did not Goodman Green's cow roll up its eyes and die the very morning that Mother Garford came there to buy a halfpenny's worth of milk? "

" Ay," broke in the magistrate, " and we have further witness, also, of her evil ways; there is not one man or woman in this town but can tell some strange tale of her. However, the proof conclusive was what happened yesterday, namely, that when she was first brought into the jail, Heaven sought to destroy so wicked a creature by casting down one of the great beams in the corridor, so that she came near to being crushed by it."

" Yes," returned Margeret undaunted, " of that I have heard, and it is of that we have come hither to speak. You may call us bewitched if you will, but I and these two witnesses of mine must raise our voices for truth and justice's sake. Come, Amos, tell these good gentlemen what befell when you climbed upon the beam. And later my daughter will have something further to testify."

Amos, quite enjoying his sudden importance, stepped up beside Margeret and told with great cheeriness how he and Dicky Porter, in their eagerness to see the witch, had damaged the beam in the corridor so that later it fell.

"And any one who looks at the broken wood," he concluded, "can see that it was rotten and ready to give way."

"The boy's words prove nothing," thundered forth Master Mather; "he and his young comrades were chosen as instruments of Providence, that is all."

It was an old explanation among the Puritans, but for once it seemed to give little satisfaction to those who listened. Amos Bardwell and Dicky Porter, small, impish and ever in mischief, seemed not the most likely tools to be chosen by Heaven. People began to shake their heads in doubt. Terror and credulity could drive them far, but there were limits, even so.

"We will listen to what the maid has to say," announced the chief magistrate, declining to commit himself over Amos' story.

Alisoun stepped bravely up and stood beside her mother. The dense crowd below seemed to her to number a thousand thousand instead of only the few hundred that they were. Her breath caught in her throat and her tongue was dry, so that the first words she tried to speak would make no sound. Did it bring help or only an added pang of shame that she saw, at that moment, Gilbert Sheffield come through the narrow street and look up at her amazedly from the edge of the throng? He had hastened from the wharf and had arrived just in time to hear her confession. For a minute it seemed that her cup of humiliation had overflowed and that she could never speak. Then one look into his honest brown eyes steadied her as nothing else could

have done; his presence gave her courage, although it deepened the crimson of her cheeks.

Mother Garford, looking down in trembling fear, spoke out for the first time.

"Oh, Mistress Alisoun, sweet Mistress Alisoun," she cried; "tell the truth and save me if you can."

Alisoun climbed a step higher and took the old woman's shaking hand in hers.

"Yes," she said, able to speak clearly at last, "the truth will save you and it is the truth that I am going to tell."

Master Mather bent upon her a threatening, scowling countenance.

"What had she to do with the accused witch?" he wished to know.

She had bought a charm, a love charm, Alisoun told him. After the first plunge it seemed not hard at all to speak out.

"And had she been alone when she bought it? Where was the charm now? Had it had effect?"

"There was one with me whose name I cannot tell," Alisoun answered. "Nor do I know where the charm is now. In my belief it had no atom of magic power nor any effect."

"Have you or that other become engaged to wed since receiving it?" Master Mather pursued relentlessly.

"Yes, the other has plighted her troth and is soon to be married," Alisoun was forced to admit.

"And the charm," he insisted, "you say you know not where it is?"

"No," said Alisoun, "it is gone."

"See you not, good people," he cried, turning

triumphantly to the crowd. "The talisman has done its work and then has vanished, yet the maid claims there is no witchcraft here. Surely she is bewitched herself or else is in league with the accused woman and her sorcery."

"No, no," exclaimed Alisoun, all trace of her terror gone, "you shall hear my story before you judge. I went to Mother Garford, whom people call the Wise Woman, to buy a love charm, that much is true. It was folly I know, and I blush for it, but maids in this village have done the same thing for many and many a year before this. The charm that Mother Garford gave us, a little, round, white stone, she said had no power alone, but must be joined with neat, well-ordered ways, with cheerful faces and clean, shining houses to give it any potency."

The women in the crowd looked at each other. This sounded, surely, more like ordinary common sense than like witchcraft.

"I was to keep the stone for seven days and then give it to my friend," Alisoun went on, "but with every day I grew to hate myself and it the more. Upon the last one I went for a long walk upon the beach, to think the matter out, once and for all. Suddenly my scorn of my own folly grew so great that I plucked the charm from my pocket and flung it into the sea. A moment later, however, I regretted what I had done, for now the talisman was gone forever and Cyn— that other would be sorely disappointed. Since I could not bear the shame of asking Mother Garford for another, I picked up a pebble from the beach where lay ten thousand just like the one I had flung away, and where, I doubt

not, the Wise Woman had found it in the first place. And the next day I gave the stone to my comrade for a charm."

"And she who had it after you, won her lover with but a plain white stone?" asked the chief magistrate, interested in spite of himself.

"With just a plain white stone and a happy heart," answered Alisoun. "It seemed to be enough."

"He-hem!" The dignified magistrate was just able to suppress a chuckle by putting his hand before his mouth. He glanced nervously at Master Cotton Mather, who stood frowning and nonplussed. While he waited, Hugh Atherton, standing among the spectators, raised his voice so that all could hear.

"I also would say a word for this poor old woman," he began. "She was my nurse when I was a boy, and a simpler, gentler soul has never lived."

"Master Atherton," shouted Cotton Mather suddenly. "You who would be a minister some day, have a care what you do. Think not that you can ever find a church to receive you, if it be known that you defended a proven witch and turned Devil's Advocate."

"I should not be worthy of a church," retorted Hugh, "did I stand by in silence and let justice go so wofully awry. Here are grave and learned men threatening the life of a poor, quavering old dame, and here are none who dare to speak for her save a woman, a young maid and a little boy. Where is our manhood, to be so afraid at such a time? Do

you remember," he went on, looking from one to another of those who stood so intently listening, "you — and you — and you, that day in the school house, when some of us, as children, sat upon the benches, and some of you, as grown men, stood about the walls and listened to the words that Master Simon spoke in our midst? It was of priests of the Roman Church and of Free-Thinkers and Quakers that we were in such deadly terror then, although we have since learned to let them dwell in peace and know that they can bring us no harm. But to-day we cower before a new fear, of spells and witchcraft and muttering old women, and it would be well could Master Simon rise up from the grave to soothe our terrors with those famous words of his —'Walk not in fear, ye men of God!'"

"Silence," roared Master Mather, leaning far out over the stairs. "Away with him; he is bewitched like the woman and the maid. Away with them all to jail!"

But the crowd was no longer with the great minister, the bubble of the witchcraft terror had burst. Murmurs and exclamations began, cries of "Good, good, Master Hugh!" "Good, brave Mistress Alisoun!" Then suddenly the murmurings grew into a rumble and the rumble into a mighty roar as the whole assembly surged forward.

"Away with *him,*" they cried. "Away with the man who would have us shed innocent blood."

Master Cotton Mather was a brave man and one always firmly, nay, stubbornly loyal to his cause. But even he could see when such a cause had perished utterly and when it were better to pursue his

object in some more hopeful place. Without another word he clapped on his rusty three-cornered hat, pocketed the great bundle of papers from which he had purposed to preach a memorable sermon on the evils of witchcraft, and, on the magistrate's opening the door, passed into the meeting house, the skirts of his threadbare coat flapping behind him in his haste. And down the hill in the bright, joyful sunshine poured the crowd of village folk, laughing and shouting and bearing in their midst, Margeret, Amos, Alisoun and poor old Mother Garford weeping with joy.

"And so," said Alisoun, finishing her story amid the breathless interest of her three listeners, "it is recorded with great pride in the annals of Hopewell that, through all the panic of terror that swept across New England, we never had in our town another whisper of witchcraft, for in this place, at least, the Gospel of Fear had come to an end. Further, from that famous meeting onward, Master Cotton Mather's authority concerning witches steadily declined and soon people throughout the Colonies would listen to him no more."

"And did Cynthia Turner marry Hugh Atherton?" inquired Elizabeth.

"Yes, at almost the same time that I became Mistress Sheffield," Alisoun answered, "and Hugh has been minister of Hopewell these many years now."

Stephen, round, rosy, cheery-hearted little Stephen, was the only one who made no immediate comment upon the story. He was lying upon the grass, his chin in his hand, his steady blue eyes staring out to sea.

"Of what are you thinking, Stephen?" his mother inquired at last.

"I was thinking," he answered slowly, "that I should like to have lived in such stirring times and to have seen such adventures. And I should like, when I come to be a man, to be as bold a sailor as my father and my grandfather, and to have such steady courage as you and my grandmother. And I should like to be as well loved by all people as Master Simon, and to tend just such a garden out of which wondrous things should come."

"I should think then," observed Elizabeth, with the air of wisdom that she loved to assume, "that you had better grow up to be a man to-morrow, for it will take you a very long lifetime to be all those things."

Stephen kicked his heels in the long grass and heaved a great sigh.

"Oh, dear," he said, "it might chance that I should never be any of them. Anyway I will try."

CHAPTER IX

KING JAMES' TREE

IT was on the day that the bells of all New England were ringing to announce the death of Good Queen Anne and the accession to the English throne of her far-distant cousin, George of Hanover, that Alisoun and Gilbert Sheffield, married now for many years, extended the boundary of Master Simon's garden for the third time. It reached now down the hill to the swift brook that sang so loud on summer nights, stretched as far as the steep, dusty highway, and took in, at the corner of the field, the great pine that had always been called King James' Tree. Master Simon had planted it, a little spruce sapling, in the last year of the reign of King James the First. A new highway had been built, skirting the southern edge of his land, and there, where the slope was steepest and the sun shone hottest, he had set the tree at the corner of the road.

"It is planted in the King's service," he had said to Mistress Radpath, "for some day it will stretch its boughs across the road and yield shade and shelter to such of His Majesty's subjects who pass this way. Therefore will we call it King James' Tree."

James the First had long been dead, his son had sat upon the throne and lost it through trying to rule with too high a hand, his grandsons had won

the royal power back and lost it again, his great granddaughters, Mary and Anne, had ruled and died, and now the royal house of Stuart had come to an end. Quite regardless of all these wars and turmoils, the great pine had grown steadily, spreading its broad branches and its grateful shade across the highway. Kings and Queens might rise and fall, but it seemed that the King's tree was to grow undisturbed forever.

"It is a noble old pine," said Alisoun, looking up at the tall, straight stem. "I wish that Master Simon could see how faithfully it is performing the task to which he set it."

Behind them, as they stood there together, rose the square bulk of the big white house with which Roger Bardwell had replaced the rude cottage where Margeret Radpath had dwelt as a child. Yet the cottage was still there, built into the heart of the great new house so that the low-ceiled kitchen, the broad fireplace with its swinging crane and the wide-opening door, hospitable to every comer, were all untouched. Roger had won great prosperity in his trading ventures across the seas, and had become master of a fleet of tall-masted vessels that sailed to England, Holland, Spain and the West Indies. Of this fleet Gilbert Sheffield, Alisoun's husband, had once been first officer and was now manager, since Roger Bardwell, and Margeret with him, slept beside Master Simon in the graveyard on the hill.

Goody Parsons, too, had long since slipped away, although she had lived to see her dearest wish fulfilled as she watched the climbing rose cover the whole grey wall of her cottage. She had told Mar-

geret, the day before she went, that she would be glad to be in Heaven, for she knew that it was "as like her own loved Hertfordshire as the dear Lord would permit." Samuel Skerry had vanished, no man knew whither, nor how he had carried away the great locked chest that tradition said held his wealth. Roger Bardwell had always declared that once as he was walking through the narrow street of a Dutch seaport town, he had seen the shoemaker's dark face peer out at him through a window. There was a certain sea captain, also, who claimed to have knowledge of where Skerry was to be found, so it was through him that Roger Bardwell sent the purchase money when he bought the shoemaker's abandoned fields and widened the bounds of Master Simon's garden. Beyond this, Hopewell heard no real news of the vanished cobbler, although the people of the village talked of him still and wondered as to which of the various terrible punishments that he deserved had overtaken him at last.

As Alisoun and Gilbert walked up to the house together a little later, they observed that Stephen had settled down to what was, for him, a very quiet game. It required a great deal of running to and fro and much laughter, but its activities were confined to the stretch of lawn nearest the big pine tree.

"They seem to be at something new," said Gilbert, as he turned toward the gate, for an errand called him to Hopewell; "where did they learn to play that game?"

"I believe Amos Bardwell taught it to Stephen when he was here last month," replied Alisoun. "What a gay time he and Stephen always have to-

gether, and how hard it is for them to part! I wish that Amos and his father did not bide in England."

"A sailor like Amos hardly abides anywhere," smiled Gilbert. "He and I have scarcely met for years, since, when one of us is not at sea, the other is. And you must remember that it is only through Amos and his father's having become citizens of England and not of Massachusetts, that we are able to keep even a part of our vessels upon the sea."

The foreign trade that Roger Bardwell had brought to such success had begun, latterly, to be much hampered by laws of England that bore heavily upon Colonial shipping. They must not carry certain commodities, they must not trade in other than British ports, since the merchants of England had become suddenly aware that the bold sailors from across the sea were beginning to take their profits from them. That was not to be endured for a moment! Therefore Amos' father, Alisoun's brother, had gone to live in London, and to manage as English owner such of Roger Bardwell's ships as it was still worth while to send to sea. Gilbert Sheffield had in charge the smaller vessels that traded with the other Colonies, Virginia, New York, and the Carolinas. Alisoun often wondered what her father would have said had he known of these restricting laws and had he seen his dearly-loved ships lying idle in the harbour of Hopewell. But of such troubled matters Roger Bardwell had never dreamed when he had laid down the burden of his labours seven years before.

Gilbert hurried away up the lane and Alisoun walked back alone and entered the house. Stephen,

she observed as she passed, was having much difficulty in teaching the new game to his sisters and the three neighbour's children. Some of his pupils were apt and some were not, while five-year-old Peter from across the way was always singing loudly the wrong words and trailing behind when he should have been marching ahead. Alisoun, as she closed the door, could hear their gay cries and laughing calls to one another.

"Hurry, Stephen, hurry, it is your turn!"

"No, Elizabeth, it is yours. Stand up and make Peter come into the row. Now, throw down your hats and begin again."

Then the irregular procession would form once more, marching with measured tread and to music sung by voices some loud and tuneful, some very uncertain and squeaky:

> "King William was King James' son,
> And from a royal race they sprung,
> Upon his breast he wore a star —"

"Stop!" cried Stephen, suddenly pausing in the middle of a word, "there is some one listening to us yonder in the road."

The music ceased, the line broke, and six pairs of feet scampered down the slope toward the corner of the newly-moved fence. When, however, the children came near enough to see what sort of a person it was that had paused under King James' Tree, there was some faltering and hanging back, so that at the end it was Stephen alone who pressed forward and peered over the bushes at the stranger.

A stout, broad-shouldered man it was who had come down the hot, dusty road and had stopped to

rest in the shade of the pine. His hair was red, his coat was redder and his face was reddest of all.

"Heaven have mercy, young sir," he said when he saw Stephen, and, as he spoke, took off his tall, gold-laced hat and wiped his dripping forehead, "but this America is no place for a hot-blooded English soldier. 'Tis worse than the Low Countries, for there at least men could find somewhat to drink, since, however many the battlefields were, there were always inns near by."

At a whispered word from Stephen, his sister Elizabeth had run off to the house and presently returned with a tall blue mug, brimming over with cool water from the spring. This was gravely presented to the traveller by Stephen, since none of the other children would venture close enough.

"Many thanks," said the man, as he took a great draught. Then he held the cup from him and looked at it in comic dismay. "Water!" he exclaimed, "sure that is a thin drink for a great stout soldier like myself, and on the King's accession day, too. But it is cool and wet, at least, and I am well-nigh choked with the dust of this weary road. So here is a health to my friend George of Hanover, may he reign long and send me on better errands than my present one!"

Thus saying, he emptied the mug and handed it back to Stephen.

"And what is the business that brings you here?" the boy inquired boldly. The soldier's twinkling blue eyes were so friendly that he no longer felt in the least afraid.

"A matter that I like none too well," the man replied. "Since there are no wars for the King's soldiers to fight at present, he must needs send us to the help of the royal navy. My business here is to seek out new timber for the English fleet. Too many of our good ships have been sent to the bottom by those agile Frenchmen, so that both the Old and the New England must give their wood that we may build our navy up again. This tree now," he added, stepping back and measuring the tall pine with his eye, "'tis a splendid great fellow, and will make a worthy mast for the flagship of the Admiral himself."

"No, no!" cried Stephen in alarm. "You would never cut down our finest tree, that my great-grandfather planted so long ago."

"The King's fleet must have its masts and spars," returned the man, "and every tree that we take must have been planted some time. It is an old law and you in the Colonies should know it well, that no timber above a certain size shall be cut save for the English navy. King George has need of your tree, my lad, and, if I mistake not, King George will have it."

"It does the King's service here," maintained Stephen stoutly, "and it shall not be hewn down and carried away to be destroyed in some foreign war."

"Eh, and who are you to say what the King shall and shall not have?" returned the other sharply. "Even I, who am Sergeant Branderby of His Majesty's army, have found it better, when the royal

wishes run counter to my own, to let the King have his way. It is wiser so, boy; I advise no one to stand against the English government unless he would come to harm."

Stephen was silent, digging his toe into the dust and wishing that he could find the words to explain his grievance. Down at the wharf lay the good ship *Margeret* and many another of his father's and his grandfather's vessels, that would cross the sea no more. It was the English boats that now did all the carrying and left the Colonial vessels idle at their anchorage. That staunch, swift *Margeret,* the pride of the whole fleet, had carried many cargoes of corn, furs and salted fish to England, Spain and France, had brought back silks and velvets, lemons and sweet-smelling spices, but she had made her last voyage! All this Stephen knew from the talk of his elders, but nevertheless found it hard to explain to the Sergeant why he thought it such an injustice that their best ships should be useless while, at the same time, their fairest trees should be cut down and carried away to build more vessels for the English. He could do nothing but repeat what he had said before:

"You shall not cut down our tree."

He looked about for the other children, but they had long since grown weary of waiting and had scampered away. He was not to have even their help.

The King's officer shrugged his shoulders.

"You can say what you will," he observed, "and sure it is that you in the Colonies permit yourselves to speak words that no one would dare utter in

"You shall not cut down our tree."

England. Nevertheless, your tree must go, and shall be cut down to-morrow, since the ship that is to carry it is already loading. For all your stubbornness you cannot resist King George."

The soldier turned away and strode off down the road, leaving Stephen choking with sudden helpless rage. He snatched up a stone and was preparing to throw it with all his force, but in the end let it drop to the ground. It would be easy enough to strike that broad, red-coated back, but of what avail were such a blow? The crowned head of King George the First was the mark at which he really sought to aim, but that, alas, was far beyond the reach of a little lad in New England. With a long sigh he turned away and set off toward the village to consult with his best friend, John Thorndyke.

Whether Gilbert Sheffield, had he known what danger threatened King James' Tree, would have resisted the law and bade the officer begone, cannot be known. When Stephen came home later, ready to tell his father the dire news, he found that a messenger had come in hot haste and that Master Sheffield had ridden off with him to join his ship in Boston. So there was an end of help from that source! Three times Stephen opened his lips to tell his mother of what was about to occur and three times closed them firmly again. Suppose she should forbid his making resistance, then what was there to be done? For Stephen was thoroughly resolved that resistance should be made.

All the next morning he circled uneasily about that portion of the garden where stood King James' Tree, but it was not until almost noon that the enemy re-

appeared. He could see them coming in a great cloud of dust, the stout Sergeant mounted on horseback, this time with two stalwart men who carried axes, walking at his side.

"A plague on this August weather," Branderby cried, as he drew up his horse in the shade. "I am nigh to death with toiling up and down the steep streets of this town. I have ridden a hundred miles back and forth, I do believe, seeking two axemen to do this task, since my own men are not to be spared from loading the ship. It seems that none could work to-day save these fellows, who dwell far beyond the village."

Stephen could not forbear grinning at these words, but strove to hide the smile behind his hand. He and young John Thorndyke had spread the news broadcast the night before, so that, although none were willing to help him in his resistance to the law, every man was ready with an excuse when summoned to cut down Master Simon's tree.

"Now," cried the Sergeant to his men, "let us have no more delay. Come, fellows, ply your axes." Both of the men hung back and the older of them spoke determinedly.

"Nay," he said, "you did not tell us that this was the tree we were to cut. All of the town knows of this great pine and of Master Simon who planted it. Not for a score of gold pieces would I lay axe to its trunk. So here is the money you gave us; we have altered our minds and will do no work for you this day."

Having spoken, he shouldered his axe and trudged sturdily away, followed by his companion, neither

of them regarding the heated remonstrances of Sergeant Branderby.

"A pest on you all," he shouted. "A Spanish mule is not more stubborn than a New Englander. But think not your tree is to be spared. I will even hew it down myself."

For that purpose the good Sergeant required an axe which he procured easily enough by riding after the departing workmen and presenting one of his great horse-pistols to the younger man's head.

"Let him have the axe, Jonas," said the elder. "If he tries to hew down the tree on this hot day he will burst a blood-vessel, and Heaven be praised if he does."

Leading his horse and holding the tool in plainly unaccustomed hands, the Sergeant came back to the foot of the pine. Here, however, a new complication had presented itself, one that made Branderby's face flush a deeper red with helpless fury.

"Come down, you wicked lad," he roared. "Come down this moment or harm will come to you, I vow."

But Stephen, who had scrambled up among the lower branches, looked down at him in mocking defiance. There was a certain kindliness in Branderby's weather-beaten face that made him almost certain that the soldier, angry as he was, would not cut down a tree with a boy clinging among its boughs.

"If the tree falls, I fall with it," he called, "so ply your axe if you dare."

Up he went, higher and higher. He passed the branch where he had so often sat to listen to the wind roaring like the sea through the great, swaying

branches, he passed the place where he had carved his name to mark the highest point that any boy had ever reached, yet still he went on, up and up. His brown head came out at last amid the thinner green at the very top, where he could feel the sun hot upon his neck and where he could look out across meadow and hillside, past the harbour and the headlands to the wide, blue, open sea. He could see, too, like a picture spread below him, Master Simon's garden with its square flowerbeds, its green hedges and its winding paths. He saw the door of the house fly open and his mother, with flying skirts and ruffled hair, come running across the lawn. Somehow she had got wind of the trouble and was hastening to interfere.

"Come down, you treacherous boy," shouted Sergeant Branderby again, "or I have that here which will make you."

Glancing down over his shoulder, Stephen saw that the officer had dropped his axe and was levelling his great, clumsy horse-pistol.

"When I say 'three,'" called the angry soldier, "I will fire, unless you have begun to descend. One —"

Stephen glanced about him desperately. He had been almost certain that the man would not harm him, but now he was none too sure. It was a fair, wide world that he was looking out upon, one that he should hate to leave so abruptly.

"Two!" bellowed the Sergeant, his voice growing louder as his rage increased.

"Stephen, Stephen!" Mistress Alisoun's voice, anxious and troubled, sounded directly below him.

"Mother," he called wildly, "do not order me to come down, for I cannot and will not." But Stephen had misjudged his mother.

"Hold fast, boy," she answered. "I will deal with this fellow here. He has no notion of hurting you, for though he pretends to aim his pistol, he has also shut his eyes."

She stepped forward, and with a quick, determined movement, struck up the Sergeant's hand just as he was shouting:

"Three!"

Stephen ducked his head and screwed up his eyes, but no report came. Looking down, he saw that the soldier had taken out both his pistols and with a great, low bow was presenting them to Mistress Alisoun.

"No gold that His Majesty may give me could force me to do harm to a spirited lad and a brave woman," he was saying. "Madam, Sergeant Branderby surrenders to you both."

Alisoun, smiling, took the huge pistols into her apron, since they were too heavy for her hands to hold. Her son, beginning to climb down, stopped to hang over a branch and listen to what was being said.

"Look not so pale, Mistress," the Sergeant begged. "The matter is settled now, for I fear that I must shirk my duty and promise to spare your pine."

"Of that I am right glad," returned Alisoun in a tone of relief, "for not only we Sheffields, but all of Hopewell, would mourn should aught of harm happen to King James' Tree."

"King James' Tree?" repeated the soldier in astonishment. "Had I known that was the name it went by, never would I have lifted axe against it. But why call you it that?"

Alisoun explained. "My grandfather planted it years ago, and dedicated it to the King's service just before the first James Stuart died."

"So!" exclaimed the Sergeant, looking up with brightening face at the tall pine. "But this is a strange world! Here is the last King James with his crown taken from him and sent into exile across the sea, and here in a corner of the New World I find something that is still called his. King James' Tree! Madam, it would be a great honour if you would permit an old Jacobite soldier to kiss your hand."

"You are then one of the party that would bring young Prince James back to be King of England," said Alisoun, as she held out her hand to him, "but yet you are wearing King George's uniform."

Above them, Stephen leaned breathlessly from his perch, afraid that he might miss a word. He had heard much of the Jacobites, the followers of the Stuart Kings, but he had never thought to see one.

"Ay," Branderby answered. "I wear his coat and take his pay, for fighting is my trade, and when there is no more fighting for King James I must even sell my sword to King William and Queen Anne, and now to King George. It matters not, the army is so full of William's left-over Dutchmen, of hired Danes and of Germans who cannot understand their English general's speech, that no one

cares for a few Jacobites. Yet I would rather die loyal in heart to James Stuart than live to be dull George of Hanover's prime minister. You may be sure that King James' Tree is safe from my hands forever."

He stooped to fling the now useless axe into the bushes and turned to take his horse by the bridle.

"Fare you well, Madam," he said, "and you also, you brave and saucy lad. Keep the pistols, if you will, Mistress Sheffield, as a memory of that King James in whose service I first carried them. And if you can, think not too ill of one who is forced to wear George of Hanover's red coat and eat his bread while his own true heart is with the King over the water."

He mounted his horse and had turned to ride away when Stephen began to climb down. The adventure was over, there was nothing left to happen further. It was only chance and because the boy turned his head to take one more look across the wide landscape spread out before him, only his own carelessness that made him slip, catch at a swaying bough, miss it and fall down — and down — and down.

CHAPTER X

"SHIPS OF ADVENTURE"

STEPHEN opened his eyes once, as he was borne up toward the house and saw, in one sudden flash, the whole bright garden lying still and quiet in the hot sun. He saw his mother, white-cheeked and agonised, coming up the path behind him and still unconsciously clutching the great pistols in her apron. He wondered a little who was carrying him and, contriving to look upward, saw that it was Sergeant Branderby and that his red face, under its coat of sunburn, had turned to mottled grey. Then a sudden stab of pain went through him and all was black again.

That cloud of darkness seemed to hang over him for weeks — or was it years? Sometimes it would lift and he would realise that he was in his own bed with his mother's anxious face bending over him, would see the open lattice window with the red tendrils of woodbine clinging to its edge, or with the moon peeping in perhaps, for in his moments of awaking it would be sometimes day and sometimes night. Once he saw the Sergeant's unhappy face at the door and was about to call to him to come in when the blackness fell again before he could find his voice. It was a queer darkness, full of pain and flashes of light and fantastic dreams that he could never remember.

In the village of Hopewell there was never one

person who could pass another without stopping to ask:

"Have you heard aught that is new of little Stephen Sheffield?"

The old doctor, when he left the big house and came out through the white gate could scarcely make his way along, so many there were who came running to him to gasp out:

"Is he better? Oh, say that he is going to live."

To all their questions his only answer would be to purse his lips and shake his head doubtfully.

"We can know nothing yet," was all that he would ever say.

King George of England would have scarcely liked to hear that in one small Puritan town his loyal subjects remembered the date of his coming to the throne only because it happened at the same season as "that dreadful mishap to Mistress Sheffield's little son, Stephen." In the history of Hopewell other boys had tumbled from trees, it was quite true, but never had one fallen who was so generally beloved or who lay so long in danger of his life.

At last a day came when the doctor, stumping up the street, told fifty persons at least between the gate and the town square, that:

"God has been good to us, the lad is going to live." Whereupon the fifty ran with all speed to tell the good news to a hundred more. Rough old Sergeant Branderby came out of the gate, wiping the tears of joy from his eyes with the sleeve of his red coat and saying to every one,

"Have you heard? Have you heard? I did not slay him after all!"

"There was no one ever thought that the fall was through fault of yours," old dame Allen told him, "and though we loved you little when you came and liked your errand less, we have learned to put up with you for the love you have shown our Stephen. Ay, he will live, it is not so easy to down the Radpath blood!"

Stephen himself, propped up in the four-post bed among the big pillows and covered over with the precious blue and white quilt that had been part of Mistress Radpath's dowry, felt himself to be a very great person indeed. He was a very pale and thin Stephen, whose knees doubled up when he tried to stand, but whose voice and merry laugh sounded quite the same.

"I know how ill I must have been, since you give me the Orange-Tree quilt," he said to Alisoun, "but I do not care ever to earn such an honour again. When can I get up and play in the garden, mother?"

"Very soon now, I hope," she answered, "but we must go carefully and do all that the good doctor says."

It was Sergeant Branderby, pale, aghast and trembling, who had carried Stephen up to his room upon that terrible day; it was the same stout soldier, beaming and jubilant, who bore him downstairs the first morning that he was able to leave his bed. Established in a great armchair on the columned verandah, Stephen held court among his youthful friends, who came running down the lane from the farthest ends of the town at the news, "Stephen Sheffield is out again."

After they had all gone home the boy leaned back

in his chair and looked up at his good friend the Sergeant, who had never left his side through all the coming and going.

"I had forgotten," Stephen sighed, as he looked out over the garden, "that leaves could be so green or sun could shine so bright. And I feel so well that surely by to-morrow I can run down the path and see what time it is by the sundial."

"Not just to-morrow, I fear," objected Branderby. Then, seeing the boy's face clouded with disappointment, he added, "Suppose I come in a day or two and carry you down yonder to the harbour's edge, where you can sit all day on the warm sand and watch the full blue tide come in."

"Ah, that will be famous," exclaimed Stephen, "and then perhaps the day after that I can run in the garden again. It tries my patience sorely to be still so long!"

The morning after this brought Stephen another visitor, a long looked-for and most welcome one. During the night a big ship slipped into the harbour and early next day a brown-faced, smiling man came striding up the path and knocked at the door. Mistress Sheffield, who opened it, flung two joyful arms about his neck crying:

"Amos Bardwell, but it is good to see you, lad!"

This, then, was Stephen's Cousin Amos, the same who, when he was a little boy, had figured so bravely in the witch affair. Although he was a sea-captain now and dwelt in England when he was ashore, he visited Hopewell as often as it was possible, and was Stephen's most well-beloved playmate in spite of the difference in their years.

"Now," he said, when he was seated at the boy's bedside, "what is this I hear of your climbing King James' Tree in defiance of the British Army and then falling out of it through turning to gape after a retreating enemy? We must have no more of such doings."

"No, indeed," replied Stephen gaily, "and when I climb King James' Tree again I will surely be more careful."

Mistress Sheffield, as she heard his cheery words, turned quickly and went out of the room, closing the door behind her.

"Lest you have such another mischance," said Amos, "I think I must give you my lucky penny that is supposed to keep off just such evil fortune." As he spoke he felt in the deep pockets of his sailor's coat and drew forth a battered old silver coin. "It may have power and it may have none, but certain it is that I have carried it since I was a smaller boy than you and have not yet come to any very grievous harm in spite of many adventurings. It once belonged to — whom do you suppose? None other than Master Simon's sworn enemy, the shoemaker, Samuel Skerry."

"Samuel Skerry?" repeated Stephen, wondering. "I thought that he disappeared the day after Margeret Bardwell's marriage and was never seen again. My mother has told me many tales of the shoemaker and his wicked ways, but she has never spoken of his homecoming."

"I think she never knew of it," replied Amos, "nor am I myself certain, though I have pondered the matter a hundred times, whether he ever really

came back or not. But my old nurse swore always that he did. When our house was crowded she used to dwell sometimes in the shoemaker's cottage, and it was there she thought she saw him."

"You say he came back?" questioned Stephen. "I do not see how he dared."

"I am not sure if he really did, but such was old Betsey's tale. She said that as she went toward her little dwelling very late one winter night she was amazed to see footsteps in the snow along the path and to catch the glint of firelight through the window. She peeped in through a crack of the door and saw the shoemaker himself, a little shrunken, bent, old man, leaning over the hearth and holding out his hands to the blaze. Then, while she watched, he climbed upon the seat of the big armchair and thrust his hand into an opening behind the cupboard. She was holding her breath and peering in with such curiosity as to what he would do next that she leaned over hard against the rickety old door and it burst open, casting her headlong into the room."

"O-oh," gasped Stephen, wriggling in delighted excitement, although the sudden movement cost him a sharp reminder of his recent fall; "oh, what happened then?"

"She screamed aloud with terror, thinking she was in the presence of a ghost, and he too gave a startled cry as he stepped down from the chair and dropped something that rolled ringing and jingling across the floor. But in a moment he turned upon her with eager questionings, about Master Simon and Roger Bardwell and my grandmother, Margeret Radpath. And over and over he asked, 'But Mas-

ter Simon's garden, does it bloom as fair as once it did?' Something he said also of a message, having to do with Master Simon, that he had come all the long way across the sea to leave with the minister of Hopewell, yet what such an errand might be he would not say. In the end he gave her the silver coin that had fallen jingling upon the floor, saying, 'I found this in my old hiding-hole behind the cupboard where it chanced to be left behind after my hasty flight. They say that money long lost and found again brings good luck, so keep it to buy your silence concerning my visit here.' She took the coin and bent to examine it in the firelight, for it was one of the clumsy old shillings of the Colony's first coinage. When she looked up again — he was gone. She came running back to the kitchen door of our big house and burst in among the other servants crying that there were ghosts and witches in the shoemaker's hut and that she would never enter its door again. Nor did she! But the coin she held in high reverence as a lucky charm and insisted upon giving it to me when I was eight years old."

"Do you believe she really saw the shoemaker?" asked Stephen. "Did you never hear more of his visit than that?"

"My grandfather, Roger Bardwell, listened to her tale and forbade her telling it to any one further. He questioned the minister next day however, who admitted that he had had such a visitor but was sworn to secrecy concerning his errand. And in the graveyard on the hill there were fresh footprints in the snow leading up to the spot where Master Simon sleeps. So it must have been Samuel Skerry

that came, but whether his purpose was good or evil no one can tell. He may have been plotting some new villainy, yet I think — yes, I have thought it often — that in his years of loneliness in a foreign land the little shoemaker came at last to repent of his jealousy and ill-will and returned finally to make tardy amends. But what his errand was, or what message he left with the Hopewell minister is a secret still unrevealed."

Stephen took the thin, old silver coin that Amos had laid upon his pillow and turned it over and over.

"You should not give it to me, Cousin Amos," he said. "You should keep it still to bring you fair winds and prosperous voyages."

"It has not always brought me those," laughed Amos. "And of what use are fair winds, when fewer and fewer of our ships are permitted to put to sea? No, it is a better luck penny for a lad than for a man, for, as old Betsey said, it requires much good fortune to keep boys from destroying themselves before they grow to man's estate. So do you keep it and if it saves you from tumbling out of any more tree-tops I shall be satisfied."

Captain Amos' visit was all too short. In spite of many protests from Alisoun and loud lamentations from all the children, he set out two mornings later for Salem, whither important business called him. Stephen grieved so much over his playmate's going that he quite forgot that this was the great day for his first expedition abroad. His faithful servant, Sergeant Branderby, had not forgotten, however, and came that afternoon, true to his promise, to carry the boy down to the shore.

"I think it must be Samuel Skerry's lucky penny," said Stephen as they set forth, "that has given us so fine a day."

It was indeed weather that could scarcely have been bettered, for the cloudless sky was glowing blue and the sea was bluer still. The little waves splashed merrily as they came tumbling in, the smooth hard sand sparkled in the sun and even the tiny grey sandpipers running back and forth across the beach seemed to be bidding them all welcome. The boy's two sisters and fat little Peter came also to play at the water's edge, while Stephen sat sheltered from the wind and propped against a huge, grey rock that lay like some sleeping monster in the midst of the drifting sand.

The children were sailing toy boats, bits of board with paper sails, launching them with some difficulty through the breaking waves, but watching with cries of joy when one after another of the little craft caught the wind and sped away. Only Peter's clumsily whittled vessel came to grief so often and was upset and washed back upon the beach so many times that finally, half crying, the little boy brought it to Stephen.

"Do make it sail," he said. "I know that you can do somewhat to make it pass all the others."

"Give me your knife then," said Stephen. Peter's coming had interrupted his absorbing talk with Sergeant Branderby, but Stephen could not, even on that account, seem unwilling to help his small friend. He had an odd skill with toy boats and could always make his sail when the others foundered.

"There," he said at last, "launch her with the

sails set so and I think she will ride the waves and outdo all the rest."

Peter, delighted, ran off to try again and Stephen turned once more to the soldier.

"And did you really see King George?" he asked, for it was of that worthy monarch that the story had to do.

"Bless you, that I did," was the answer, "and it was not so wonderful a sight, merely a fat grey-haired man, blinking from his recent nap, and with a halting tongue that could speak no word of English. Kings and Queens are more common than they used to be, since the people of England discovered that they could dispose of them at will, and fell into the way of changing their monarchs often. Eight have I seen in my own time, eight men and women that wore the crown of England."

"What?" exclaimed Stephen. "Eight! How could that ever be?"

"'Tis as true as that I sit here," returned Branderby seriously. "There were Charles the Second and his Portuguese wife, Katherine; there was his brother James who reigned after him and there was that Italian Princess who became James' Queen. Not long did he reign, poor James Stuart, for his daughter Mary and her Dutch husband, William of Orange, came across the channel and drove the last Stuart King from the throne. Those two wicked ones I have seen too, and Mary's sister Anne, the Queen for whose death the bells were ringing upon that very day that we first met. And that German George who sits now in her place, him I saw in the Low Countries, where we fought so long a war that,

when it was finally ended, scarcely any one remembered for what reason it had been begun. So there are eight English Kings and Queens that my own eyes have seen, to say nothing of a host of French dukes and marquises of the royal blood, and more German princelings than my dull wits could ever learn to count."

"You must have had many wondrous adventures," sighed Stephen. "I can scarcely wait until I become a man and can have them too."

"Look, look," Peter interrupted them again with a joyous shout. After two vain launchings, his little boat, trimmed by Stephen's skilful hand had at last put to sea successfully and was rocking upon the waves as merrily as a duckling.

"Good," called Sergeant Branderby, "our Stephen knows how to fashion a boat, does he not, Master Peter?"

In great excitement Peter ran off down the beach, following his boat as it drifted with the wind.

"I should think," continued Stephen, going back to their former talk, "that it would be hard to learn loyalty to so many Kings and Queens, following so quickly one upon another."

"Love of the King has gone somewhat out of fashion in England," returned the soldier. "Once in the golden times of great Queen Bess, folk were all of one heart and one blood, nobles and gentry, Kings and commoners, Englishmen all. But now that we have taken to trying this foreigner and that upon our throne, monarchs seem to have less value in our eyes."

He paused and through the quiet could be heard

Peter's shouts to the two girls to stop and admire the prowess of his vessel.

"When I see how little you people of New England regard who is, or who is not, upon the throne," Branderby went on, "when I see those splendid ships of yours lying at anchor or rotting at their docks, when I hear the growing murmurs of discontent and questioning where once men accepted the King's will and thought he could do no wrong, I wonder, lad, I wonder what will come of it. The signs of great changes are in the air, but I cannot read their meaning."

He was silent again, musing upon the question that so perplexed his mind. He and Stephen both heard, presently, footsteps upon the sand, coming toward them from beyond the great stone. They had seen, in the distance, a shabby woman of Hopewell digging for clams, aided by her ragged boy. The footsteps were evidently of these two, coming home again since now the sun was dropping low. Unseen and not observing the soldier and the boy, they passed by on the further side of the high grey rock.

"Mother," the boy's voice was saying, "I have heard that Stephen Sheffield is getting well at last. Will he be able to play at Indian scouts with me soon again, think you?"

The woman's voice answered slowly:

"It is not likely that the Sheffield lad will ever run and play again with the other boys," she said. "The doctor, so people tell me, says that he will live, and will not be crippled, but that he never will be well and strong again like other children."

The two passed on and never knew of the secret that they had betrayed. Stephen heard them with his face gone white and his eyes wide with terror.

"Tell me," he cried to Branderby, "she does not know? That is not true?"

The old soldier growled and muttered something below his breath, something far from flattering in regard to idle women who gossip on the beach.

"I will know," gasped Stephen, shaking him by the arm with all his feeble strength. "You shall tell me. Did the doctor say such a thing?"

"In my opinion," grumbled the Sergeant, "these men of medicine know little and their word is scarce worth believing."

"But did he say it?" persisted Stephen. "I will have the truth."

"I would sooner face a siege cannon belching smoke and fire," muttered Branderby. Then he turned to Stephen and looked him fairly in the eyes. "We are both men," he said steadily, "and a real man can bear a blow though it be a hard and bitter one. Yes, lad, he did say it."

Stephen made no answer, for he had flung himself face downward upon the sand. One long terrible sob shook his thin body and then he lay still. The Sergeant's hard, rough hand was laid over his clenched one.

"There are some that help the world forward by their strength of arm," he said gently, "and some by their power of mind and will. We cannot all be of one kind or the other, for we know the world has need of both."

The boy sat up. There was a flush on his thin cheek and his jaw was set firmly.

"We will not tell my mother that I know," he began, "and perhaps some day — but oh," he broke off, "my thought was always to be a sailor like my father and my grandfather and my Cousin Amos, to sail mighty ships like the *Margeret* to the farthest foreign ports. But now — I shall be fit only to launch such vessels as Peter sails."

His brave voice did not tremble but the hand in Branderby's shook.

"I have often seen children sailing such ships," said the soldier, "and never see them without thinking, as many others do, how like they are to human lives. Some upset, some sink, some drift back and forth hugging the shore, while others spread their sails and put bravely forth to sea."

He pointed to where the little fleet of wind-tossed ships had scattered wide. Many of them had suffered mishap, even as the Sergeant had said, some had disappeared and some still clung to the shore. But Peter's boat, the vessel of Stephen's fashioning, had caught the wind and was skimming away toward the harbour's mouth. The red of the dropping sun coloured its tiny white sails, its long shadow stretched across the green waters making it seem greater than it was, as with steady prow it bore away, bound, it seemed, for Spain or France or some magic country that no man knew.

The rough old soldier's hand closed tight on Stephen's.

"Whatever comes to you, boy," he said; "whatever life brings to you of pain or disappointment or

sorrow, of one thing I am certain. What your future will be, I may not know, for presently I will go back to England and we may never meet again. But whether your days are to be dark or bright ones, whether time is to bring you good or ill, of this I am sure, that the world will have need of you some day, and the ship that you launch will carry far."

CHAPTER XI

FAIR MAIDS OF FRANCE

IN the end the old doctor was neither wholly right nor wholly wrong. Stephen was never again the square, sturdy lad that he had been before his terrible illness, but none the less he grew through an active boyhood and became a busy, useful man. If it ever was a bitter pain to him to see other boys swim and run and climb in a way that he could never do again, no one had known of it save perhaps his mother, or his good friend Sergeant Branderby who had so long ago returned to England. His hopes of being a soldier or a sailor were destroyed forever in that single moment when he slipped from the pine tree branch; instead he became a lawyer and made so brilliant a record that he should have had small time to grieve over vanished dreams.

While he was still little more than a boy he became the most honoured member of the Hopewell community; long before his hair was grey he began to be spoken of as one of the great men of the Colony. What Master Simon had been to his own little town, Stephen was beginning to be to all New England. Governors and King's officers sought his advice, merchants and ship-masters and labouring men of every kind and degree laid their perplexities

before him. That he was esteemed the wisest man in all Massachusetts was denied by no one save Stephen himself. With honest sincerity he laughed at all allusions to his greatness and thought of himself only as a humble man of law.

"If I have had good fortune," he used to say, "it is because of the shoemaker's luck-penny. If people come to me it is only because they know that I am a hampered fellow and cannot well go to them. It is kindness of heart and that alone that brings a portion of the great world past my doors."

It was a strange and motley procession that went in and out of the great house, for half of his guests were dressed in frieze and homespun, while the other half came clad in satins and velvets and gold-laced scarlet coats.

Gone now were the old times of rigid economy and stern simplicity among the Puritans. Men wore bright-coloured uniforms, lace ruffles and great powdered wigs, while the women, with their jewels, their patches, their high, red heels and long brocaded trains, were as gorgeously arrayed as the ladies of the English court. There used to be noble gatherings in Stephen's big dining-room, when the greatest men in the land sat about his board and the tall wax tapers shone upon the officers' red coats and jewelled orders, upon the ladies' powdered hair and diamonds and upon the more soberly rich garb of the wealthy Massachusetts citizens. A throng of black-faced servants, themselves decked out in livery and powdered wigs, would wait upon the company and later conduct them into the long white-panelled drawing-room whose open windows looked out across the

garden to the sea. Or, if it were winter, the guests would gather about the fireplace which, although much of the house was new, was the same rough stone one built by Master Simon's hands. Amid this gay crowd of friends moved Stephen, quiet-mannered and simply clad, the only ornament upon his dark coat a diamond star given him by the King of France.

That was a time, also, when the garden bloomed in greater glory than it had ever known before. Those to whom Stephen had done good, and these were a countless legion, could give him nothing in return in the way of money or high office, for such rewards he did not want. But the royal Governors could send him costly fruit-trees from their English estates, poor sailors could bring him rare plants from foreign lands and his good friends of Hopewell could offer him the best they had of flower or fruit. The gardener used to say that Master Sheffield gave away so many plants and flowers that soon there would be nothing left, but that is the usual talk of gardeners. This one, with his acres of many coloured blossoms could not say, generous as Stephen was, that the danger of stripping the garden was a great or an immediate one.

One portion was left unaltered, that planted by Master Simon; for bee-hives still stood in a row beneath the old, old apple trees, and daffodils in Spring and hollyhocks in summer still bloomed in a riot of colour beside the white gate. The Queen's garden, too, was untouched by any change and here Stephen came often to sit on the bench under the linden tree and to ponder upon the more and more

grave problems that must be solved by those who had the welfare of New England at heart. Troubled times were these, with greater difficulties plainly still to come. It was here that he was sitting, one summer day, knitting his brows over a letter with a great, red seal, when there came an interruption that was to mean much to all his after life.

The creak of the opening gate announced a visitor, its hurried bang as it closed again told plainly that the new-comer was in haste. Looking up from his letter, Stephen saw before him the town constable, his good-natured face clouded with perplexity, his brass-tipped staff, the badge of his office, held stiffly before him, a sure sign that public duty was weighing the good man down. He was followed by a middle-aged woman whose dark, weatherbeaten countenance was lined with grief and whose hair, under her odd, close-fitting starched cap was threaded with grey. She bore in her arms a bundle of what seemed to be nothing but delicately embroidered garments but which, suddenly beginning to stir and turn, revealed itself as a dark-eyed baby of possibly a year old. The woman dropped a deep curtsey and then stood waiting in silence.

"Please, Master Sheffield," began the distressed constable, "this woman is one of the exiles from Acadia, who, as we all have heard, were landed seven days ago in Boston and who have been wandering all through the Colony. She has somehow come this far, but there is no one in the town who can tell what to do with her. She understands no word we say and, when I speak to her, only curtseys,

weeps or breaks into some foreign jargon of her own."

"From Acadia?" repeated Stephen. His clear eyes clouded at the name, for he knew and bitterly regretted the policy that had led British troops into occupying the French-speaking province of Acadia, and into driving all the peaceable inhabitants into exile. Hurrying them on board ship, they had sent them off anywhere and everywhere, in wild haste to be rid of them, little caring whether families were separated or children and their parents were lost to each other forever. Stephen, very gently and kindly, spoke to the woman in her own tongue.

Such a flash of joy as lighted up her poor worn face when she heard speech that she could at last understand, and such a flood of voluble French as she poured out when Stephen had finished! The constable looked on in amazement and finally heaved a long sigh of relief.

"I might have known enough to come to Master Sheffield in the first place," he exclaimed. "He always knows what is best to do!"

Stephen, after talking a few minutes with the woman, turned to him.

"I will take the poor creature into my service," he said, "there is need of another helper in the kitchen and there seems naught else to do with her. She can live, with the baby, in the cottage across the field yonder, it has been empty this year past. Take her up to the house, if you please, good Master Constable, and tell the servants to give her a meal and something for the baby. And bid Jason, who was

with me in France and can speak a few words of her tongue, to go with her and show her where she is to abide. It is a good child you have," he added in French to the woman, "is it a granddaughter or a grandson?"

"The baby is a girl, Monsieur," she answered, "but not mine. Indeed I have no way of knowing to whom she belongs, for, just as I was being taken on board ship to be torn forever from my dear native land, I found this little one wailing on the beach, left behind, in the confusion, by the boat that must have carried away her parents. And I, who had lost all those belonging to me in the same way, gathered her into my arms and kept her with me through all the long, dreadful voyage. A good child she is indeed, and I have named her Clotilde, after my own little daughter that died twenty years ago. May Heaven bless you for taking pity on us and letting us bide where we can hear our own speech again."

She was led by the constable up toward the house while Stephen returned to his letter. It had to do with a mission to England that all the worthies of Massachusetts were begging him to undertake. Once before this, he had gone to France on a weighty errand for the people of the province. He had come back with the mission well performed, with the good will of the French people and with the diamond star that the French King's own hands had pinned upon his coat. And now his comrades were asking him to take up a still more difficult task, to do what he could toward healing the growing breach between the Colonies and the Mother Country.

Even as Sergeant Branderby had said, Kings and Queens had grown to be of less value now, so that, with the fading loyalty to the crown, there had diminished the regard of the New World for the Old. The dashing Stuart Kings had been beloved in a way, so had the simple-hearted, good Queen Anne, but these German princes who sat on the British throne, who possessed little power and who were half the time in Hanover, what bond had they with the Colonies? It was hard to be loyal to political governors, to the constantly changing ministers in London and to the Parliament that was ever piling up new laws that bore heavily on America. It was, therefore, to mend these difficult matters that Stephen Sheffield was begged to go to England.

"Ah, well," he said at last, coming to the end of a long argument with himself, "my strength is not much, but if it is of any worth to my Colony I may as well give it while I can."

So it happened that the little cottage that had once been Samuel Skerry's had scarcely received its new French tenants before the great mansion on the hill was closed and its master had sailed away to England. Madame Jeanne Lamotte, or Mother Lamotte, as the Acadian woman came to be called in Hopewell, kept a watchful eye upon Stephen's house and the negro servants who had been left to care for it. For the rest of the time, she was busy scrubbing and polishing in the shoemaker's dilapidated cottage, and tending the rapidly-growing Clotilde. A merry, active little girl she soon grew to be, with yellow hair and great dark eyes, quick and dainty in her ways and looking, so the people of the village

said, more like an infant angel than a foundling French child.

Slow-sailing ships and slow-dragging politics kept Stephen long away, so that it was more than two years before he returned to America. He brought with him, when at last he came, a priceless document, signed by His Majesty King George the Second, and, what was of far greater worth, by the new and powerful Prime Minister, William Pitt, assuring the Colonies of their rights and privileges for a time at least. But even now his travelling was not at an end, for he made long journeys up and down the sea-coast, preaching a new political doctrine of which he had begun to see the desperate need, namely union for all of America. If the colonists were to guard their freedom, they must learn to act together, to band themselves into a nation of their own.

Friends remonstrated when they saw how much more frail and ill he began to look, how hollow his gay blue eyes were becoming and how grey his hair. But Stephen laughed like a boy at all they said, and put their warnings aside.

"Grudge me not my share of the game," he would say. "If the fighting comes, you that are staunchly built and mighty of limb will then have your turn and mine will be over. Let me do my part while the time allows."

It was only once during this long period that he saw the little Clotilde. The meeting occurred one late afternoon when he was abiding for a day or two in his own house and had walked out into the garden to enjoy the coolness, peace and quiet beauty. Guests were coming later among whom there would

be much weighty discussion of urgent affairs, but now, for a little, there was rest and stillness.

As he passed down one of the grass-covered walks, he heard, behind the hawthorn bush, a sweet clear little voice singing an old French song. He turned the corner of the path and came upon the little Acadian girl, sitting beside a bed of white and yellow flowers and looking not unlike them herself, so fair and dainty was she with her fresh white kerchief, her snowy apron and her bright golden hair. Seeing Stephen, she jumped up, quite unabashed, and dropped him a prim little curtsey.

"Tell me, what are you doing here and what was it you were singing?" he asked with a smile.

"It was a French song that Mère Jeanne taught me," was her reply, "and I come here often to sit by the flowers and sing to them."

"You sing to the flowers?" he repeated, puzzled. "What leads you to do that and why to these especial ones?"

"The gardener told me that they came from our land," she answered gravely, "and that the name men give them is 'fair maids of France.' So, since they are in exile as well as we, I come and sing my French songs to them, lest they grow lonely and weep as Mère Jeanne so often does."

Stephen held out his hand and took her tiny one into it.

"You are a very little maid to be so loyal to your country, and to your fellow exiles," he said, "and you are young indeed to know the sorrows of banishment. Suppose you lead me to that Mère Jeanne of yours, so that we may try to comfort her a little."

That night Master Sheffield's guests, although they were many and of high importance, had to wait in the long drawing-room, while their host, yonder across the misty field, sat on the bench before the shoemaker's cottage and talked in French to Mother Jeanne Lamotte. She, poor soul, had learned but little English and found black Jason's few halting words of French, very small comfort indeed. Now that she could pour her heart out to one who could understand her native speech, it seemed as though she would never have done. Stephen duly admired the neatness and strict order of her little dwelling but finally declared that it had grown too old and tumble-down for comfort and that she and Clotilde must come to abide in the great house, where, since his sisters' marriages and the death of his parents he lived alone save for the black servants.

"There is room in abundance," he said, "and the little maid will help to brighten a place where all of us, master and men, are growing dreary and old together. Would you like to dwell there, Mademoiselle Clotilde?"

"Indeed I would," she cried with joy, "for there are great wide rooms to play in and here are only four walls and a smoky chimney."

Mother Jeanne reproached her severely for this criticism of their dwelling but Stephen, laughing, insisted that she was right and that the change must be made at once. But when next day Mother Jeanne and Clotilde gathered up their few possessions and carried them to the big house, they found the master gone again and for several months they saw his face no more.

He went and came much in the years that followed so that he and Clotilde caught only fleeting glimpses of each other, yet learned, for all that, to be close friends. Sometimes he found her racing about the garden walks with her boon companion, Miles Atherton, a sturdy, slow-spoken lad of Hopewell, sometimes he found her going about her work in the big house, for she was nimble-fingered and industrious and began early to be a great help to her dear Mère Jeanne. There was one cosy winter evening when she sat on his knee before the blazing fire and heard the tale of King James' Tree and of Sergeant Branderby and learned how his two great pistols came to hang above the chimney-piece. Upon another occasion, a warm summer morning when the linden tree was in bloom, he and she and Miles Atherton sat upon the bench in the Queen's Garden while Stephen told the two eager children the story of Master Simon and Queen Elizabeth, and of how Margeret Radpath and Roger Bardwell had, on that very spot, witnessed the French priest's forbidden mass.

Stephen told them too, one rainy day as they sat in his study, of Jeremiah Macrae and his still unfulfilled prophecy of the destruction of the garden. He even got down the great family Bible and turned the pages to find that same picture that had struck terror to the heart of little Margeret Radpath, the figure of one of the prophets of old, standing by the city gate and crying forth a warning of the ruin and desolation that would come to the land. The tale laid such hold upon Clotilde's imagination that she dreamed that night of the ominous Master Macrae

and thought for many a day thereafter of what he had foretold. So dearly did she love Master Simon's garden and all that grew in it, that the very thought of harm coming to that dear place was more than she could bear. One day, some weeks after, Miles came upon her with the great Bible open on the table while she stared in terrified fascination at the picture of the prophet.

"Surely you are not thinking of that story still!" exclaimed Miles. "Why the man has been dead and his words forgotten for nearly a hundred years. You do not think that what he said could really come true, Clotilde?"

"N-no," she faltered, closing the book with a great sigh, "I do not think his words could come true — but they might. I do not know what to think, yet I cannot put the tale out of my mind. When Master Sheffield comes home I will ask him whether I should believe it or not."

"We will ask him," returned Miles sturdily, "but I will not credit such a dismal prophecy unless I must."

Clotilde would have given much to feel as he did, but could not put aside the secret misgiving hidden in her heart. She never let Miles see her looking at the picture again, but she peeped at it more than once, none the less. Quaint and rude as was the old woodcut, there was still something very earnest and very terrible about the face and figure that were supposed to resemble Jeremiah Macrae's.

Before Stephen returned, however, the affair had very nearly drifted from her mind. There were long, long months now when the master of the house

was from home, when she missed him sorely and when Mother Jeanne would shake her head and say:

"Our good Monsieur has not too strong a hold upon health. It will cost him his life if he does not give up these endless journeyings."

There came an evening when Stephen, after a long absence, drew rein before the door and dismounted, almost too weary to climb the wide, stone steps. It was to a nearly empty house that he came, for the servants had all gone to some festival in the village and only Clotilde came running out to welcome him with a shout of joy, while Mère Jeanne stood smiling and curtseying in the doorway.

"There will be three men to sup with me," said Stephen, "so have all in readiness as soon as you can. And let my man Michael, when he has carried in the saddle bags, eat and go to bed at once, for he is worn out with our long riding."

"But yourself, Monsieur!" Mother Jeanne ventured to remonstrate.

"No, no, woman," he replied quickly, "I am not weary and have much work to do."

The guests arrived presently, all three riding up to the door together. There was Doctor Thorndyke of Hopewell in his shabby plum-coloured coat and muddy boots, and with him two strangers, one from Boston, so Clotilde gathered from their talk, and one from Salem.

"We came in company," said Doctor Thorndyke as he dismounted at the steps, "for our friend here tells me that a man rode after him half way from the last inn and that he fears some rascal may have got wind of the money that we carry." He un-

strapped his saddle bags and carried them into the house. "My faith," he said, "but I am not often so valuable a man as I find myself to-night. I fairly jingle as I walk!"

Mère Jeanne, who was a famous cook, had prepared a supper fit for King George himself. Clotilde waited on the company and received a nod and smile from Doctor Thorndyke who was her old and well-loved friend. When the meal was ended and she came to carry the plates away, she found that the dishes had been pushed back and that each man had produced a leather bag and had poured out on the table a stream of gold, silver and copper money. Every kind of coin was there, clumsy pennies, silver shillings, Spanish gold pieces of eight. When all was counted and piled in a heap together it made a sum that caused Clotilde's eyes to open wide and quite took her breath away. It was a strange sight, the pile of coins shining in the candlelight, the three eager faces lit by the yellow flame, with Stephen's white and weary one resting against the back of his big armchair.

"Here, then," she heard Doctor Thorndyke say as she was carrying away the last of the dishes, "is the money for our first fighting-ship, the gift of Massachusetts to the United Colonies. The sum has been generously given by rich and poor alike, for people are beginning to look a little into the future and to see that there will be need for such a ship and many others. It would have been a misfortune surely had we been robbed upon the way."

"I can scarcely believe," observed Stephen, "that

there is any one in the colony capable of such a deed."

"We boast some precious rascals in our midst," said the man from Salem, "men who, if they would not do it of their own will, could easily be persuaded to the task by some one above them. I think that the authorities have got wind of our plan and, not daring to take so bold a step as to confiscate the money openly, would be glad to lay hold of it in some such way. However, the whole matter is a mere guess; there may have been no harm in the fellow who followed us. At any rate, we have arrived safely and the money for our ship lies here upon the table." He filled his glass and held it up:

"Gentlemen," he said, "I give you the American navy."

"I have a further gift to add," said Stephen as he rose with the others to drink the toast standing, "for I can see now that the great pine tree at the corner of my garden can be of better service than as a shelter to travellers on the King's highway. It shall form the mast of our new vessel and shall put to sea flying the flag — of a new nation."

A shout and a clinking together of glasses followed his words, but Clotilde heard no more for she had gone out with her tray and the door had swung to behind her.

The night was warm and the long windows of the hall stood open into the garden, letting in the scent of heliotrope and wallflowers and the far-off sound of the sea. Clotilde, a little weary with the bustle of unexpected preparations, set down her tray upon the sill and leaned her hot forehead against the cool

pane. Outside there was only starlight, but so clear was the night that she could make out the lines of the garden hedges and the narrow, winding walks. How strange, she seemed to see a darker shadow moving toward her among the flower beds, then another, and another! Could it be the servants coming home?

In the dining room, Stephen and his guests were leisurely returning the money to the leather bags and discussing as to the safest and quickest method of sending it to Boston, when they were startled by the sudden crash of the window's swinging back upon its hinges. A tall, dark-clad man climbed over the sill, levelling toward them the long barrel of a pistol. Behind him, three more scrambled up and, similarly armed and similarly threatening, stood in a sinister row against the wall.

"Hold up your hands, good masters," ordered the first one, with an easy insolence that had almost the air of official authority. "You are dead men otherwise, so you may as well obey!"

The three guests did as they were told instantly, the doctor sputtering with rage and threatening the robbers with dire punishment. But Stephen's hands did not move.

"Quick, sir," commanded the robber. "Have you no regard for your life?"

"I have," replied Stephen quietly, "but I have a greater regard for the people's money that has been entrusted to my care. Were it my own, I admit that I might give it up to avoid bloodshed, but as it is —"

There was a burst of flame from the robber's pis-

tol and a loud report. The ball cut through Stephen's coat sleeve and grazed his arm so that the warm blood came trickling down into his hand.

"Now will you give up the money?" cried the thief as Stephen reeled and caught at the back of the chair.

"No!" was his defiant answer. His only weapon was the ebony cane that was always near his hand, but with this upraised, he advanced upon his enemy. The masked robber lifted his pistol again.

"Come, men," he was saying.

"Bang," came a deafening crash from beyond the door. Had a cannon been discharged within the house it could not have sounded louder. The thieves drew back and looked at each other dismayed.

"Bang," came a second explosion more terrific than the first. It shook the walls of the whole dwelling and was followed by the tinkle of breaking glass.

"It is the town watch!" cried one of the robbers.

Out through the window they plunged, stumbling and jostling and falling over one another in their haste to escape. Doctor Thorndyke sprang forward in pursuit unarmed as he was, the man from Salem was about to follow, but Stephen held up his hand.

"Let them go for the moment," he said, "should they turn upon you in the garden you were surely a dead man. I will have my servant carry the alarm to the village and call out the town watch." He sank into the big chair and his friends hastened to support his bleeding arm.

"Open the door," Stephen directed weakly. "Let us see to whom we owe our rescue. I am well-nigh certain that it was not the watch."

It was Doctor Thorndyke who did his bidding, threw open the door and started back in amazement at what he saw. Upon the threshold stood a dainty little maiden with golden hair and neat, white frilled apron. In either hand she held a great, smoking, horse-pistol.

"Clotilde!" cried Stephen. "Where, in Heaven's name, got you such weapons?"

"They were Sergeant Branderby's," she replied simply. "There seemed naught else to do, so it occurred to me to climb up and see if by chance, they were still loaded. I regret that I broke a window and blew two great holes in the frame."

"You are a brave lass," exclaimed Doctor Thorndyke. Stephen put out his unwounded arm and drew her to him.

"Child, child," he said, "the pistols might have burst and killed you where you stood!"

"That were no matter," maintained the little girl stoutly, "so only you and the public money were safe. Oh, oh, you are hurt!"

"It is nothing," Stephen assured her, although his face was growing whiter every moment. "Here," he continued, turning to the others, "is a generous enemy. Although she is a prisoner of war and an exile from her own land, still she risks her life to preserve us from our foes. What say you to such a maid of France?"

"I say that her banishment should be at an end," said the man who stood nearest, "and that she

should be given, with all honour, a safe-conduct back to her own country."

Stephen had been fumbling in his pocket and now drew forth a key.

"Unlock yonder cupboard, Clotilde," he said, "and bring me the velvet case that you will find therein."

When the box was set upon the table before him, he opened it and showed the diamond star that, on great occasions, he wore pinned to his coat. He took it up and awkwardly, with his one hand, fastened it to Clotilde's dress.

"The gift of the French King," he said, "finds its true place over a brave French heart!"

The three men bowed to the little girl who stood in awed and bewildered silence.

"Clotilde, my child," went on Stephen, his voice growing suddenly strangely faint, "will you accept what this gentleman offers and can give you, a safe-conduct with Mère Jeanne back to your own country?"

"No, no," she cried, finding her voice at last. "I do not wish to go. I want to stay here, with you, always!"

And springing forward she was just in time to fling her supporting arms about him as he fell back, unconscious, in his chair.

CHAPTER XII

THE BREAKING OF THE STORM

DURING Stephen's illness that followed, it was Mother Jeanne's devoted nursing that brought him back to health and her hard, brown, skilful hands that tended him with untiring faithfulness. Illness was no new thing to Stephen Sheffield, but this long healing of an ugly wound was hard for him to bear when so much was passing in the world outside and the problems of the Colonies growing graver every day.

"I will tell you nothing," Doctor Thorndyke would say gruffly when Stephen, as soon as the Doctor appeared in the doorway, would begin to beg for news. "You fret yourself into a fever whenever I relate of some new tom-foolery wrought by King George the Third and his bat-blind ministers. Therefore I will say no more, since my first duty to my country is to make Master Stephen Sheffield well again."

But as soon as Doctor Thorndyke was gone, Clotilde would steal to Stephen's bedside and recount all the news of the day that she had gathered from Miles Atherton, for she knew, better than did the gruff Doctor, that it is wiser to tell a sick person the truth than to let him fret for the want of it. She was his constant and cheering companion through this time,

since she was nearly as good a nurse as Mother Jeanne and quite as devoted a one.

It was upon her strong young shoulder that he leaned that first morning when he walked downstairs and out into the fresh air. He sat for a long time on the bench in the Queen's Garden, feeling the sun warm upon him and watching the slow shadow of the sundial creep toward the hour.

"Do you see that?" he said to Clotilde, pointing to the steadily lengthening shadow that stretched its dark finger across the dial. "You can as easily stop the movement of that shadow as you can hold back the disaster that threatens these Colonies. Yet many people think that they can accomplish both the one and the other by the simple device of shutting their eyes!"

As he grew stronger and once more took up his burden of public affairs, it was Clotilde who sat by his side, wrote the letters that his wounded arm still made impossible, ran his errands and delivered his orders. She had been an apt pupil at the village school and, now that she was growing toward womanhood, was quite capable of becoming a clever and ready secretary. She and Stephen grew very close to each other during his illness and their labours together afterward, and finally became far more like father and daughter than like wealthy patron and humble French orphan girl.

People of the town began to speak of her quite as often by the name of Clotilde Sheffield as Clotilde Lamotte. What her real name was, remained a never-solved mystery, for, although Stephen made many inquiries, no clue was ever found as to who

her parents might have been. Mother Jeanne had always declared that the girl came of people of higher station than herself, a truth that every one began to realise as Clotilde grew older. In spite of her having lived in New England since before she could talk, there was still retained in her speech and her deft, quick ways, a faint flavour of the well-born Frenchwoman. Passionately as the girl loved her old peasant foster-mother, it became more evident every year that the birth and breeding of the two were not the same.

That she was becoming also a great comfort to Stephen Sheffield was very plain to all who knew them. Without her, the big house would have seemed empty indeed to him, although lonely such a man as he could never really be. Friends, servants, acquaintances, all who came near him must love him. Even now, when his hair had grown nearly white and his shoulders were bowed with heavy cares, there was something about the eagerness of his clear, blue eyes and the boyishness of his slow, sweet, friendly smile that made all hearts turn to him. Mother Jeanne would have gladly laid down her life for his sake and so, as she had already proved, would Clotilde. He was reaping now the reward of his kindness to the homeless Acadian woman and her charge, for he had the older woman's faithful service and Clotilde's love, reverence and companionship. Friends who had grieved much over his never having married, felt now that they need be concerned no more, since Clotilde was as devoted to him and he to her as though she had been a child of his own.

In spite of his being unable to resume his long journeys from Colony to Colony, his share in the public affairs was still very great. Many grave men of high importance came to consult with him, and every day, it seemed, messengers arrived with packets of papers or great sealed official letters that must be delivered in all haste to Master Sheffield. While the answers were being made ready, the men would sit before the kitchen fire, refreshing themselves with Mother Jeanne's substantial good cheer and giving, in return, news of what was going on in the world outside Hopewell.

Clotilde, when her services as scribe were not needed in the study, loved to stand by and listen to the strangers' talk, of how such and such a man had been put in jail for refusing the King's officers the right to search his house for smuggled goods, or of how such and such a ship had been turned about and sent back to England because the Americans would not pay the tax on her cargo of tea. With one conclusion the tale invariably ended, no matter who it was that spoke to the little audience gathered in the kitchen.

"If I were the King," the men would always say, or "if I were William Pitt," or "if I were Governor of Massachusetts, I would do such — or such a thing and all would be well."

Once Stephen interrupted an address of this kind, when he came to the kitchen door himself, the completed letter in his hand.

"There is much you can do in your own person, David Thurston," he said quietly. "This is a time when every man must act for the public good with-

out waiting until he become Governor or Prime Minister or King George the Third."

"God bless you, Master Sheffield, and I will strive to do as you say," the man replied. He went away laughing, but with a new determination in his rugged face.

A scarlet-uniformed soldier, bringing a letter from the Governor, sat upon the settle one day drinking gratefully, after his long ride, a great mug of home-brewed cider. He heard Clotilde speaking in French with Mère Jeanne and looked round at her in surprise.

"How come you to speak that tongue as though you were born to it?" he asked. "There are not many of you New Englanders who have learned French."

"We are Acadians," Clotilde told him, "and still cling to our own speech, although it is many years now since the brave English soldiers drove a harmless people from their homes."

"Ay," answered the soldier without anger at her words, "that is a blunder for which England must answer some day. Wrong she did then, perhaps even greater wrong she is doing now, so that there has come between the New Country and the Old so wide a breach, I fear, that it will never be healed. Belike they will pour into the gulph a few thousands of us who wear the King's red coat and that may end the quarrel and it may not. Time will tell — and that right soon."

Clotilde watched him ride away, cantering through the sunshine and dappled shade of the long, tree-bordered avenue, with a great rattling of spurs and

creaking of saddle-leather. In spite of his words, and although both were thinking of the future, neither he nor she had the faintest dream of the strange circumstances under which they were to meet again.

Other news she used to hear, too, from Miles Atherton, who was a member of the Hopewell company of minute-men that drilled every morning in the town square. He was nearly a man now, still sturdy and square and slow of speech, but bearing the same stout heart as did his grandfather, the Hugh Atherton who dared to speak out for justice in the famous witch panic. Often, when he came of an evening, Stephen would call him into the study to question him as to how people thought and felt in the village, and how many had joined the band of minute-men. More often, when there was distinguished company with the master of the house and Clotilde had finished tending and serving the guests, she and Miles would walk in the garden, their tongues still busy with talk of the King and his ministers and the shameful tax on tea. They were only like all the rest of New England, where people could think and talk of but little now save the growing cloud that hung over the Colonies.

There were no longer those brilliant, festive gatherings in Stephen's dining hall, or laughing, gorgeously dressed companies grouped about Master Simon's wide fireplace in the drawing-room. Instead, grave-faced men would sit late into the night around the table in Stephen's study, sit so long indeed that more than once Clotilde, slipping down to begin her work in the first faint light of dawn, had

found them still in their places, the table covered with guttering candles and strewn with papers, the faces of all looking white and weary and worn. On one such occasion Stephen heard her pass the door and called her in to find some papers that he had been unable to get together himself. In spite of the long discussion, the talk was still going on as she stood searching in the carved press.

"I tell thee, friend," a stout grey-coated stranger was saying, "England forgets that for long years she has sent the freedom-lovers to America to be rid of them and has granted them many liberties as a bribe to them to stay there. Now, in the third and fourth generation, the Mother Country seeks to take back these privileges and to make us law-ridden and yoke-bound like her own Englishmen, who have stopped at home. It is a mistake that will cost the King dear."

"Yea," ejaculated a man beside him whose black clothes indicated that he was a minister. "They sowed the wind, they will reap the whirlwind!" The black-clad gentleman, it seemed, was on the point of delivering a long sermon upon this text had not Master Sheffield, taking up the papers that Clotilde gave him, rather adroitly cut the dissertation short, at which the stout Quaker chuckled behind his hand.

Later in the morning Clotilde stood by Stephen in the porch watching the broad back and wide grey hat of the stout visitor as he and his plump, ambling white horse disappeared down the avenue.

"Look well at that man, Clotilde," said Stephen, "he is a Quaker and would, in Master Simon's time

have been whipped and stoned out of Massachusetts. Now we are proud that we have speech with him and that he has come all the long way from Pennsylvania to consult with us. We Puritans have learned a little, a very little, in a hundred years."

Clotilde sighed heavily and turned to go in. It seemed to her that she cared little to hear of such progress when all the time her dear Master Sheffield was growing thinner and whiter and that terrible war was coming ever nearer. She felt as she often did when the clouds of a summer thunderstorm were hanging lower and lower above the house, when the light was of a weird unearthly brightness and the air so terrifyingly still that, frightened as she was, she almost prayed for the storm to break.

The Spring passed and the summer, while the rumblings and threatenings of war still sounded loud. Then, through the autumn and winter there was a lull, people began to look more cheerful, to talk of the possibility of a peaceful settlement, of England's understanding that the struggle with the Colonies would be too long and bitter to be worth while. For the work that Stephen had done toward bringing the provinces together, those steady years of hopeful toil, had begun to bear fruit at last. Committees of Correspondence had been formed, the Continental Congress had met and the organisation of the Massachusetts minute-men had been copied by similar bands all up and down the sea-board. The friends of America in England, were pointing out to the headlong King George the Third that he was facing a nation with an army, instead of a handful

of helpless rebels. So, for the winter at least, the King paused. And then came Spring again.

It was an evening in April after a clear warm day, full of the sweet scent of growing things. A dash of rain had pattered over the garden, to be followed, just at sunset, by long, level shafts of light that shone on fresh green grass and budding shrubs and trees. A robin, in the hedge of the Queen's Garden, was singing so loudly that Clotilde came to the great open door to listen. The willow trees beyond the garden were yellow with young leaves and the line of daffodils by the gate had bloomed in a nodding row. Then suddenly as she stood there, the robin's little voice was drowned by a wild, fierce jangling of bells in the village, and a tall red tongue of flame leaped up from behind the houses on the hill. A thudding of hoof-beats came madly down the lane and a man leaped from his horse and ran in through the white gate, leaving his animal standing with the bridle trailing over its head. With hurried feet he came up the path and mounted the stone steps two at a time.

"A letter for Master Sheffield," he said, "and news, great news! The British troops and the minute-men had a running fight from Concord to Lexington and back again. The Americans were too much for the redcoats and the bells are pealing forth the tidings of our first victory. The people yonder in the town are burning the tavern sign of the 'King's Arms.' The war has begun!"

With his letter in his hand he vanished into Stephen's study, the door closing behind him.

"So this is the war at last!" thought Clotilde.

Her knees began suddenly to shake under her and she sat down upon the step since she could no longer stand. It had begun, and where would it end? Would it bring them liberty or only destruction? Would the death and ruin that were bound to come be kept back, or would the tide rise nearer and nearer, to sweep over dear Master Sheffield and Mother Jeanne, over Miles Atherton and herself? Would it roll its devastating way across Master Simon's garden blooming so bright and fair in the last glories of the April sunshine?

Later she heard fuller tidings, for Miles came up from the town and, sitting on the steps beside her, gave an account of the battle in more glowing and excited words than she had ever thought to hear from his lips. The hero of the day, it seemed, was one Paul Revere, that mild-faced silversmith who had come only last October to set in place the silver knocker upon Stephen Sheffield's front door. At his warning, as he galloped all night across the countryside, so Miles said, the minute-men had come tumbling out in an excited throng, half dressed but wholly ready for the work in hand. When the sun rose, the British soldiers had found themselves marching down what seemed to be a lane of unseen enemies whom they could not see to resist, so that the march became a run and the run a rout. It was a damp, hot Spring day and the King's men, oppressed with their heavy, clumsy coats and high padded hats, had been soon spent with heat and fatigue, and had staggered and reeled as they ran finally into the arms of their waiting comrades at Lexington.

"Poor men!" was Clotilde's one thought, which she spoke aloud. "Poor, brave men!"

"What?" exclaimed Miles. "Poor men? Why, Clotilde, you are not sorry for them? They were Britishers!"

"I do not mean to be sorry for them, but I am," she answered. "They did their best and it was not really their quarrel."

"And to-morrow," concluded Miles excitedly, "we are all to turn out, the fighting-men all over New England, and march down to Boston to lay siege to the British Army. Oh, it will be a merry time!"

"Merry!" cried out Clotilde, "you call it merry when you may have to slay men and may never, never come back again yourself?"

"And if I should never come back," said Miles, half laughing, half sober, "would you be sorry, Clotilde?"

"Sorry?" She looked up at him, at dear, bright-eyed, stout-hearted Miles with whom she had played, by whom she had been befriended ever since she was big enough to play at all. At the thought of his never coming back, a gush of tears rose to her eyes and ran unchecked down her cheeks. She sprang up without speaking further and ran into the house.

The study door stood open so that within she could see Stephen sitting in his big chair with his grey head bowed upon his hands. He looked, as he sat there, pathetically weary and worn. She slipped into the room, and dropped upon her knees beside his chair and laid her hand upon his.

"Dear Master Sheffield," she said, "are you so grieved that the war has come at last?"

"Ay, grieved I am," he answered slowly as he put his arm about her, "yet, in a measure, I am lighter of heart, now that the thing that we have so long dreaded has finally come upon us. But, dear Clotilde, while I would give all I have, house, lands, life itself, for the winning of this struggle, yet I thank a kind Heaven that the war has found me old and outworn, unable to go forth and slay my fellow men."

CHAPTER XIII

LIGHTING THE FIREBRAND

FORTH to the war marched the men of New England, light-hearted every one of them and thinking, as did Miles, that the siege of Boston was to be a merry affair.

"We will be back in three months," they said to their wives as they bade them good-bye. "We will drive those redcoats into the sea and convince King George of what stuff we really are made. Then it will all be over."

So down the roads came pouring a motley stream of volunteers, clad in hunting shirts and homespun, armed, for the most part, with the strangest weapons, flintlock muskets a hundred years old, clumsy, ancient blunderbusses and homemade pikes. All of the would-be soldiers knew how to shoot, but very few, how to march or drill; and nearly every one of them desired to be an officer. Who was to be found who could change this earnest-hearted but many-minded rabble into an army? That was the question on everybody's tongue.

To the women of New England, however, the war seemed a greater and a graver thing, for it is easier to feel misgiving when you sit at home alone. What mattered to any one of them how short the struggle was if the goodman of that particular house

never came home again? Yet there was little time for brooding since, if the war was to go on, the women must do their part. The army must somehow be given clothes to wear and food to eat, and out of the households of America must all such garments and provisions come. Down from the garrets were brought the big spinning-wheels that had long been laid away, and loud was their song as they began to whirr like swarming bees; the looms creaked, the scissors snipped, needles flew in and out and the ovens glowed all day long, for every one who was not at the war was toiling for the army.

Among all these busy ones, Clotilde and Mother Jeanne and the company of servants in the big house did their full share. Stephen, meanwhile, prowled up and down the narrow bounds of the garden and frowned and shook his head over the letters that came to him from Philadelphia, where the Congress was sitting. Such endless arguments, disagreements and downright quarrels were occupying them while the precious days passed! The lesson of acting together seemed a hard one for the Colonies to learn.

"If you could but be here!" was the burden of nearly every letter that came, although they who wrote and he who read both knew that such a thing was impossible. The long perilous journey to Philadelphia was utterly out of the question for a man of advancing years and such frail health as Stephen's. Gladly would he have taken all risks had there been any hope, even in his own mind, that he could reach Pennsylvania with strength enough left to be of any use. Not even he could think so, however.

Mother Jeanne, provoked out of her usual respectful silence, observed grimly, when she heard the journey suggested:

"Monsieur must believe that a dead man would be a welcome addition to that great assembly."

One journey, however, he did take and Clotilde with him, for which, although he was ill afterwards, neither of them could ever be made to express regret. It was early in July that they travelled up to Cambridge to see the review of troops before the army's new leader, Colonel George Washington, out of Virginia. After the review was over and Clotilde had gazed her fill at the marching soldiers who were beginning at last, in form and discipline to resemble an army, and at the tall splendid figure that had ridden up and down the lines, she was amazed to see the General turn, come toward them and dismount a few paces off. Stephen, leaning on his cane, had stepped forward to render his duty to the Commander-in-Chief, but General Washington was too quick for him, and advanced to take his hand before he could speak.

"I came to offer my respects to you, not to receive yours," said he, "to salute the man who, above all others, has made possible what we see to-day."

"No, no," exclaimed Stephen, "there is no credit due to a man who has been able to accomplish as little as I."

"It is through your unwearying toil," insisted the General, "through your preaching of the need of union up and down the highways and byways of America, that this thing has come to pass. To-day an obscure soldier of Virginia takes command of an

army where men of his own State, of Pennsylvania and of Maryland are ready to fight side by side with the minute-man of New England. The honour of this achievement, sir, is all yours!"

He drew his shining sword and held it up in grave salute to this great citizen of Massachusetts who stood there in his homespun coat under the shade of the wide elm tree. Out came the swords of all the officers of the General's staff, while from the men of the army rolled up so great a shout that it might have been heard across the river in beleaguered Boston. There was something like tears in Stephen's bright eyes as he looked steadily into the grave blue-grey ones of Washington and spoke his answer.

"Whatever small work I may have begun, sir," he said simply, "I surrender now into far more able hands, to be carried to a glorious end."

And raising his hat and holding it high above his head, he led the crowd of bystanders in a lusty cheer for General Washington.

Clotilde, standing at his side, was trembling all over with joy and excitement. She was so happy that her Master Sheffield had received the tribute that was so justly due him, she longed so to be a man and able to fight in the splendid cause of liberty. She saw Miles Atherton's brown face among the lesser officers and flashed him a bright look of admiration and delighted envy. Alas, her share of the struggle must be fought out beside the spinning-wheel and the loom and the blazing kitchen hearth!

She had no chance to speak to Miles, for presently he and his men were told off in columns and

marched away toward Boston. The music of the drum and the high, thin fife playing Yankee Doodle died in the distance and there was left only the sound of thudding feet, scuffling in a choking cloud of dust. She longed to watch the last soldier out of sight, but Stephen led her away to the waiting coach.

It was an exciting journey back to Hopewell, through the villages where flags were flying and drums beating and where the people came running out to cheer Master Sheffield as he went by; through stretches of dark forest where the rough roads threw them about in the big, clumsy coach and where there might be King's soldiers lurking in every thicket. Although Stephen assured her that all the redcoats were shut up in Boston, Clotilde rather hoped than dreaded that the little party might be attacked and nobly rescued, perhaps, by Miles Atherton and the brave men of the Hopewell company. But no such thrilling adventure occurred and the journey was accomplished in safety.

As they were driving through the town next to Hopewell, late in the evening, they passed a huge fire that was burning before the gates of a stately brick house set far back from the road.

"Oh, look, look," cried Clotilde, "and oh, what a dreadful smell!"

Surely it was a fearful odour that rose from the bonfire fed by a score of hurrying black figures. Baskets full of evil-smelling sulphur were being emptied into the flames so that clouds of suffocating smoke rolled toward the house and penetrated the doors and windows, tightly closed as they were.

He drew his shining sword and held it up.

"That is the abode of Andrew Shadwell," Stephen told her. "He is a Tory and a sympathiser with the English, so, rich and influential as he is, his fellow townsmen are visiting him with dire punishment."

Cries of "Blow up the fire!" "Smoke him out, the traitorous Loyalist!" were going up as the coach rumbled past, Clotilde burying her small nose in her kerchief as she went by.

"No one need tell me that the spirit of the intolerant old Puritans is quite perished from the earth," laughed Stephen, as they finally passed the place and were able to breathe again. "Andrew Shadwell must be a sorry man this night that he voiced his opinions so loudly."

There began, after this journey, the endless, breathless waiting while Boston held out in spite of the long siege and while all watched patiently for the time when the British should be starved into surrender. Now and then, bodies of the King's troops broke through the circle of besiegers and made desperate sallies into the surrounding country for food and supplies, of which the city began to be sadly in want. Or sometimes an English ship would land a handful of redcoats here or there upon the coast, who would make a dash through a town or two, burn a few houses and hurry back to the safety of their vessel. Otherwise, there was little news or excitement through the long summer, and the hum of the spinning-wheels and the thump, thump of the busy looms sounded peacefully from every open cottage door.

But the peace of Hopewell was not to remain un-

broken. There was one night when October had come, when the corn and wheat and oats had been gathered in, when the yellow pumpkins and rosy apples were ready for harvesting, that Clotilde became aware of a commotion in the fields beyond their garden. There were moving lights, voices and the sound of tramping feet in the hard yellow stubble. A few minutes later, Miles Atherton, thinner and browner for his months of soldier's service, but the same earnest-eyed, little-speaking Miles, came in at the wide-open door.

"I must speak with Master Sheffield," he said briefly to Clotilde, although his face shone with excitement.

"Come in, lad," said Stephen, who was standing by the study door. "What can it be that brings you here? I see by your face that it is something unusual that is on foot."

"It is," replied Miles in troubled tones. "There is a company of redcoats who have slipped out of Boston and have so far eluded us who were sent out to capture them. They have never before ventured so far as this, but they are growing desperate in the city and they know that the whole countryside, up this way, is full of well-stored barns from the abundant harvest. This raid is made by a troop of soldiers greater in number than we had at first thought, so we have sent for reinforcements and are to make a stand near Hopewell and hold them until help comes."

"Yes, yes," said Stephen quickly and a little impatiently, for this amount of information from Miles

came very slowly. "I understand. And where is the fight to be?"

"Why," Miles went on, his voice becoming more anxious and worried, "we could make our stand to the south of your grounds here, but the situation is not good and we would run the risk of losing all, since we are greatly outnumbered. Master Sheffield, you must order out your coach and come with us."

"But why?" questioned Stephen in surprise, and "Why, why?" gasped Clotilde.

"Because there is great danger," cried Miles, "great danger to you all in biding here. We fear that one purpose of this raid is to accomplish Master Sheffield's arrest. You are spoken of among the English as one of the leaders of the rebellion, and therefore we are certain that it is the order for your capture that has brought the redcoats so far. Could we make a stand here and protect you, most surely we would, but the country is too open and the way too clear. We would, every one of us, willingly give our lives to save you, but common sense tells plainly that a battle here would be to no purpose and you would be taken in the end. So do make haste, the men are hot upon our heels."

"Nonsense," exclaimed Stephen. "There is no ghost of danger. I have, indeed, had letters from the British authorities that lead me to believe that they love me not, but I am not so great a man for them to take such trouble to accomplish my capture. Come, Clotilde, tell this foolish lad that his friendship for us has made him over anxious."

But Clotilde, for once, forsook his side and joined her voice to Miles' arguments. That stout soldier, after laying forth his plan to march through Hopewell and the next village and make a stand on North Hill, a spot so favourable that they could be certain of holding fast until help arrived, firmly maintained that he would not stir one step without Master Sheffield and neither would his men.

"Well, well," sighed Stephen at last, "an old man must give in to importunate children. To give battle here would, as I see, merely waste lives that the country needs and might also lead to the slaying of innocent towns-folk and the burning of houses. So, if you will not go on without me, I must needs come too. Clotilde, go tell Jason to order out the coach."

Preparations were so hurried that there was no time for useless bewailing. Some of the silver was hidden, some of the linen locked away, but nothing of real service could be accomplished. As Clotilde ran through the hall, pulling her cloak about her, she saw that the great Bible had been brought out of the study and was lying on the table. Mère Jeanne had felt that it would be wicked to leave it behind, but had been obliged in the end to put it down hastily, as it was too heavy a burden to carry far. The breeze from the open door had fluttered over the pages so that, as Clotilde stopped to blow out the last of the candles burning upon the table, she saw staring up from the open page the dark terrifying face that stood to her for Jeremiah Macrae.

"Oh, no," she cried aloud in terror, as though his words had actually sounded in her ears. "Not

that! Not that!" And she ran out swiftly, leaving the book still open on the table.

Mother Jeanne and one or two of the older servants came with them, the rest sought shelter in the village, so that the house was left unprotected and all alone. Clotilde, looking back through the coach window, could see the kitchen firelight still shining through the vine-hung casement and could feel her hot tears flowing at the thought of rude hands battering at the door of that beloved dwelling and clumsy feet trampling the flowers that still bloomed bravely in the garden. Then, as a turn in the road hid the house from sight, she laid her head against Mother Jeanne's shoulder and wept bitterly.

She seemed to remember afterward only brief snatches of that strange night's ride, first their passing through the town of Hopewell and Stephen's leaning from the coach window to bid the people stay quiet in their houses and leave the fighting to be done by Captain Atherton's soldiers. Then, after bumping down the road at a hurried gallop, they drove through the next town where, before a gate, Andrew Shadwell sat on a great black horse.

"Ha, Stephen Sheffield," he called, "it was you who rode by me in your pride some months ago, but now, when you pass again, you are fleeing from your enemies and my friends. In a week you will be begging me to intercede for you with the King's officers. Your time is over, man!"

The last words could scarcely be heard as the big coach rattled down the road, while Stephen smiled grimly and made no reply. Mother Jeanne, be-

tween hysterical sobs, was crying out in voluble French that the ride would kill Monsieur Sheffield and that they might as well have remained at home to be murdered comfortably in their beds. At this Clotilde sat up, dried her eyes and fell to comforting her, that Stephen might have, at least, some peace and quiet on this sad journey. The stars began to show in a misty sky and, by the pale light she could see that they were slowly mounting a long, steep hill. Here they waited for a time until the soldiers, who had dropped behind, could catch up with them. Miles came to the coach window to tell them that this was the point he had chosen to make his stand and that they were to drive on for three miles to a little inn that would give them shelter.

"Should there be danger, I will send a messenger to bid you flee farther," he said, "but for that, I am sure, there will be no need. The enemy is pushing on, hot foot, to capture you and us, and will fall headlong into our hands."

He dropped behind once more, and the big coach rumbled and jolted on into the dark. Up the long hill it crawled, then paused again to rest the horses for a moment on the summit before it went over the crest and plunged into the sheltered valley beyond. Looking back, Clotilde thought she could see a far, red glow in the sky that faded even as she watched, and died down so quickly that she did not speak of it. After that things seemed to become confused in the darkness, it seemed only a moment before they arrived at the inn, where the sleepy, blinking landlord came out to lead them inside.

They heard a sound of far-off firing as they dismounted from the coach.

Inside, with the fire rebuilt and the settles pulled forward to the blaze, she and Mère Jeanne sat facing Stephen and waited, so it seemed, for something like a hundred years. Although she thought that it would be wicked to sleep when they were in such trouble and Miles in such grave danger, still she dozed against Mother Jeanne's shoulder, woke and fell asleep again, this time so soundly that she never knew when they laid her down, covered her with a cloak and let her slumber quietly the whole night through. She sat up with a start, however, when, just as day broke, there was a loud knocking at the door and Miles burst in, ruddy, excited and triumphant.

"The victory is ours!" he cried. "We held them stoutly until the other troops came up to help us, and the whole band of King George's men had to surrender. There are six English officers prisoners, looking as though they would rather stab themselves than be taken by a handful of backwoods patriots and there are, I know not how many German privates, hired by King George to fight his rebels for him."

"And so you have them all?" said Stephen; "that is indeed well done!"

"There was one officer that escaped," admitted Miles, "for he alone would not surrender, and with dare-devil courage broke through the troops behind him, on his big grey horse and got clean away. But we have all the rest and our losses are most miraculously few."

"Did they — did they stop to do harm to our dwelling?" inquired Clotilde falteringly, almost afraid to learn the truth.

"That I do not know," Miles answered, "although I have asked many times. The officers will not tell and the Hessians cannot, since they speak no English. Poor things, they seem to have small objection to being prisoners."

It was full daylight when they set out on their homeward journey, a dull, raw day, threatening rain. Stephen, leaning back among the cushions of the coach, slept at last, but looking so white and spent that Clotilde and Mère Jeanne gazed at each other in anxious dismay. The way seemed very long, over the hill, past their meeting-place with Andrew Shadwell and out into the open country again. The townspeople came out in such throngs to stare at the Hessian prisoners, who were marching behind, that progress was hampered and the coach, finally drawing away from the soldiers, went forward alone.

They were passing a narrow crossroad, Stephen asleep, Mother Jeanne nodding and Clotilde staring idly through the window, when she was suddenly startled by the thunder of flying hoofs. A man mounted upon a tall grey horse went by at a headlong gallop, passing so near that the girl could see his face plainly, even to the shape of his square jaw and, almost, the colour of his eyes. Beneath his flying cloak she caught a glimpse of scarlet uniform.

"It must be the officer who would not surrender," she cried softly. "Perhaps Andrew Shad-

well hid him but was afraid to shelter him longer. Oh, I wonder if he will escape in the end."

There was no one to stop him now, except old black Jason on the box, who seemed to have no desire for such a task, so the man swept by unhindered and soon dwindled to a flying speck far off down the road.

It was strange how closely she had seen his face, and stranger still the feeling she had that it was somehow familiar. In vain she searched her memory, she could think of no place nor time when she could have seen such a man before. She pondered much over this curious thought of hers and only forgot it when the big coach rolled into the streets of Hopewell.

People came running out of their houses to stop the horses, peep inside and see if their well-loved Master Sheffield was really safe. There was a queer, subdued look upon all the friendly faces, a look speaking of news too grievous to tell. It frightened Clotilde and made her wish that the coach would hurry and bring them safely home. The same feeling, also, seemed to have seized old Jason on the box, for, instead of going round by the tree-bordered avenue, he took the nearest way, rattled down the lane at a great pace and drew up with a jerk before the little gate.

Clotilde opened the door and got out stiffly. She looked before her, then rubbed her eyes and looked again with a sickening feeling of having come unexpectedly upon a place that she had never seen before. This great open space inside the gate was

surely not the place where they lived! But still, there was the little white gate, and there across the field was Samuel Skerry's cottage where she and Mother Jeanne had once dwelt.

"We have come down the wrong street," she cried to Jason on the box, but he, in silence, only shook his head, the tears running down his black wrinkled face. The real truth began to dawn upon her, very slowly.

Stephen Sheffield stepped out of the coach and, leaning on her arm, made his way, without speaking, through the gate and across what had once been the garden. Only a tall stone chimney, standing upright in the midst of a heap of smoking embers, showed where the great white house had stood. The fire that had consumed it had swept across the lawns, burning flowers and hedges and the dry, frost-killed grass. Of Master Simon's garden there was nothing left save the littered gravel paths, the blackened linden tree and the stone-based sundial upon which the watery autumn sunlight was faintly marking the hour of noon.

CHAPTER XIV

COUSIN BETSEY ANNE

EVERY door in Hopewell flew open wide to offer shelter to Master Sheffield now that he was homeless, but it was Samuel Skerry's little cottage that, in the end, became his abode. It had been rebuilt three years before, for use when the great house was over-filled with guests, and it was now warm, cosy and comfortable, although a trifle narrow in its limits.

"A man had best abide under his own roof," Stephen had said when Mother Jeanne pointed out to him the discomforts of living through the winter in so small a place. So there they dwelt, Stephen, Clotilde, Mère Jeanne and black Jason, while the other servants were lodged in the village.

Little by little, they learned the story of how the house and garden had been destroyed. It was plain that the soldiers had acted upon well-understood orders for they had stopped but a few moments, had given no time to robbery or pillage but, once convinced that Stephen was not there, had set fire to the house and stayed only to see that it was well ablaze. They had seemed to know, also, that the garden was the love and pride of its owner, for they had piled straw among the flower-beds and about the hedges and trees, had laid the torch to this inflammable fuel

and then had marched on again, leaving the whole place a mass of drifting smoke and evil, licking flames. Only the memory of Stephen's stern command as he drove through the town had kept the people of Hopewell from falling upon the destroyers and giving them battle there in the streets.

"As it was, we could only turn our energy to the saving of your gear," said one of the narrators, a lean old man who lived, in abject poverty, at the outskirts of the village and who, by Stephen's charity alone, was kept from starving. "We rescued what we could, and with a right good will, but we would rather have been dealing out death to those rascally heathen-speaking soldiers of King George."

"And if you had," commented Stephen, "there would have been fifty houses burned instead of one, and many a goodwife to-day mourning the loss of her husband or her son, rather than one man grieving for his house and garden."

"I came so quickly when I saw the smoke," resumed the old fellow, "that not all of the soldiers were yet gone. One company, it seemed, had marched behind the rest and only came up when the house was all ablaze. The young officer who led them seemed sorely angered at what the Hessians had done; I heard him say hotly to his superior in command,

"'Such wanton destruction is a sin and a shame, sir.'

"I verily believe he would have set his own men to putting out the fire had they not been commanded to go forward at once. I was made bold by seeing that there was one kind heart amongst them and

called after, 'Never fear, sir, we will care for our good Master's property,' and he turned and waved his hat to me as he galloped away. I went up to look at the prisoners when they were marched into Hopewell next day, but he was not with them. I thank Heaven that he was the single one that escaped."

"You did well," said Stephen. "I hear from all sides how much you and your comrades saved."

"There is not a house in Hopewell," replied the man, "that has not within it somewhat that belongs to you, linen, portraits, silver — all that we could carry we bore away. I sought to save your great Bible which lay just inside the door, but it was all in flames when I seized it. I had only a glimpse of an open page and upon it a black figure with outstretched arms, and then the whole crumbled to ashes."

"So there is a fitting end to Jeremiah Macrae," said Stephen, "one that would have pleased the old Puritans most mightily. Now we need never again think of that evil prophecy of his."

"I saved something further," went on the man, "for at my house I have —"

"Hush," whispered Stephen, as Clotilde came up the path toward the cottage door, her head drooping, her eyes upon the ground. "We will talk of that matter no more. The little maid grieves so sorely over the loss of the house and garden that I like not to speak of it before her. What you have you must keep for a space, since here we have no room for aught beside our immediate needs. So do you guard my rescued property until I ask for it."

So the old man went away, shaking his head sadly over the listless greeting that Clotilde bestowed upon him when they met at the door. It was true indeed that she thought of little else but Master Sheffield's loss and grieved so, that all the people of Hopewell who knew and loved her looked after her in despair when she passed by.

"The maid is fair sick with her sorrow," they said to each other. "One would think she were of Master Simon's own blood, so stricken is she."

Although Clotilde was not of Master Simon's race and kindred, she loved his memory as dearly as though she were. There was not one story of the staunch old Puritan and his brave children and grandchildren that she had not heard Stephen tell a dozen times. And now to see perish that precious work of Master Simon's own hands, the garden that had bloomed through four generations — it was seemingly a greater grief than she could bear. Gone was the bed of blazing tulips that every year renewed the memory of that first coming of the Indian ambassadors, gone were the rows of herbs that had soothed and healed so many ills, burned to a few blackened twigs was the huge hawthorn bush that Master Simon had grown from a tiny slip brought from England. Roses, hollyhocks, lilies, fair maids of France, all had their stories and all were dead. More than once Clotilde had slipped out, in the dusk of the autumn twilight, laid her cheek against the charred bark of the linden tree and sobbed out her grief alone.

"It was all the fault of that wicked Scotch minister," she burst out one day to Stephen. "That

his prophecy has been fulfilled and the garden destroyed and even his likeness burned, makes me think that he was, as people used to say, in league with the Devil!"

"No," returned Stephen quietly, "he was a man trying to do good according to his own lights and he spoke with shrewd good sense, although perchance he knew it not. Such a person as Master Simon, who dared to stand against narrow public opinion when he knew himself to be right, who taught his children and his grandchildren to do the same, did he run so little risk of bringing danger upon himself and upon that which he left behind him? Master Simon loved freedom and justice, so do all of us who are of his blood, so do the children of those bold Puritans who lighted the fire of a new liberty upon our shores. It is that same fire, my child, that has burned through four generations, and has spread over our whole land. If, upon its way, it has scorched our hearts, and has robbed us of what we loved, let us not cry out, but rather blow the bellows and keep the flame bright so that our sacrifice may not be in vain."

Clotilde pondered his answer long and found it both wise and comforting.

Meanwhile the slow siege of Boston dragged on, and people began to say that the war would be begun and ended in a contest between General Howe and General Washington as to which one could wait the more patiently. News leaked out that supplies were becoming wofully few in the city, now that Washington had drawn his lines more firmly and no more bands of marauding redcoats had been able

to break through. As the cold weather came on, the activity of the busy housewives was redoubled in the effort to keep well supplied the shivering soldiers of the Continental Army. Clotilde stood at her spinning-wheel, or sat all day at the loom that had been left in Samuel Skerry's workshop ever since the time of the bold Puritan weaver who had built the house. Here she laboured from dawn to dark, while Stephen, when he was not writing in his own tiny room, would sit near her in the big armchair, sometimes reading to her to make the toilsome hours pass more quickly. He himself was very busy in these days, however, for many a messenger clattered up to the door, and many important documents went in and out of the little house or were locked away in the cupboard where Skerry had hidden his gold. Stephen had had the little windows protected with iron crossbars and heavy locks put upon both the doors, so that no pilfering fingers should break in to steal the state secrets of the new country. There were many important meetings in the room upstairs, while Clotilde sat alone below, whirring her busy wheel, looking out through the little barred windows at the falling snow, and dreaming of Master Simon's garden when it was green and fair. Now and then a scribbled letter from Miles would reach her, but as the boy was sparing of written words, he gave her little news of himself. The first real tidings of him she received when David Thurston brought a letter for Stephen and stayed to consume, with great delight, one of Mother Jeanne's hot mutton pies.

"You can tell Master Sheffield when he comes in,"

he said, for Stephen was out and did not return while the man was there, "that David Thurston has taken his advice and is doing his own part as a fighting man instead of sitting by the fire telling of what he would do were he King George. It is sometimes a weary and a hungry task, this siege of Boston, but all of the Hopewell lads are doing their share bravely. Our young Miles Atherton is a Captain now: heard you of the deed he did just before Christmas?"

"No," exclaimed Clotilde. "What was it?"

"He is, indeed, a wonder of daring," Thurston answered, "for he ventured into Boston in a huckster's garb and brought forth his cousin, Betsey Anne Temple, and her daughter. Lone women they were, the older one ill, and both suffering much from the hardships of the siege. Miles has leave to visit Hopewell soon, so he will perhaps tell you the tale of his adventure himself, but, being so modest, he will not let you see how bold a stroke it was."

After the man had gone, Clotilde stood dreaming beside her wheel, forgetting to wind the spindle or take up another roll of wool. She was proud of brave Miles, proud that he should risk himself on such a chivalrous errand, and a little envious still that he should do such things and she must bide at home. She longed to see him and tell him how well she thought he had done. It was not until she heard Stephen's slow footstep on the path outside that she remembered herself and her task, and fell to whirling her wheel around as swiftly as though it had wings.

Some days later she heard the story from Miles

himself, who came whistling up the path to knock at the door of Master Sheffield's new abode. Stephen, sitting in the big armchair, rose to greet him cordially and bade him take his place on the settle on the opposite side of the fire. Clotilde was just coming in from the kitchen as Stephen was saying:

"These are brave accounts that we hear of you and your gallant rescue of your Cousin Betsey Anne. We are all proud of you, lad."

The girl could not, at that moment, see Miles' face, but she noticed that his ears turned suddenly the colour of flame and she heard him mutter,

"I would that people did not make so much of so small a thing!"

"Nay, but it was no small deed," insisted Stephen, "and the risk was really great, as we all know. There is no hope of success in your effort to make light of what you did, the grateful tongue of your Cousin Betsey drowns all you can say."

"It is so," answered the boy with a sigh. "Did you ever know a woman so feeble of body, yet so untiring of speech? I sometimes think it is small wonder that the British were so willing to let her pass."

"For shame, Miles," laughed Clotilde, coming at this moment round the corner of Stephen's great chair. "You do a gallant deed and then seek to spoil it by such ungallant words."

Miles' face lighted happily as he rose to greet her, but dropped once more into gloom as he sat down again. For a few moments he remained silent, gazing into the fire, and then burst out into hurried and determined speech.

"You cannot know, Master Sheffield," he said, "how terrible it is to be praised by all for a deed whose memory brings me only rage and shame. People call me brave when really I have done nothing save to prove that I am the greatest and most blundering fool in General Washington's army. I came hither with the firm determination that you, at least, and Clotilde, should know the truth of this adventure, since to you alone I can speak freely. Ah, I could beat my head against the wall when I think of what a booby I have been."

"Tell on, boy," directed Stephen, smiling, "but allow us to reserve judgment until we know all."

He leaned back in his chair, puffing at his long tobacco pipe while Clotilde bent forward in hers, with her hands clasped tightly in her lap. Miles drew a long sigh of relief, and began.

"My mother had spoken and written to me, more than once, of the plight of her cousins who were alone and helpless in Boston and in great distress. The British have been allowing the women and the non-combatants to go forth, but held back all the able-bodied men, so these two were free to go but, the mother being ill and the daughter timid, the task of passing the lines alone seemed more than they could undertake. The matter of coming to them looked hopeless for a time, but in the end was simple enough. Certain market gardeners, living on the outskirts of Boston but within the besieged circle, still sell their wares in the town, and most welcome they are. One of these gardeners is David Thurston's brother, and, although the man himself is with our army, his wife is carrying on the busi-

ness to keep herself and the children from starving. To this house, therefore, I stole in the night, was given the clothes of the gardener's boy and, in broad daylight, drove into the town, mounted on a load of turnips and cabbages. Faith, soldiers and civilians alike were so glad to see aught that they could eat, that they had no eyes for the lad who brought it."

"It was something of an undertaking," commented Stephen. "You ran the risk of being arrested as a spy, which is no pleasant fate."

"I think you dared most nobly," cried Clotilde, her eyes bright with eagerness to hear the rest of the story, "and oh, what fun it must have been to go through the streets crying turnips and cabbages!"

"Ay, it was for a time," said the boy, "and my first mark of stupidity was that I delayed my errand merely to enjoy myself and loitered about far too long, watching the swaggering, redcoated soldiers and the Hessians drilling on the Common. Presently, however, there passed a man in a Captain's uniform who looked at me so long and keenly that I whipped up my horses, turned the nearest corner and drove rattling down the street to Cousin Betsey's house.

"The two women were so overjoyed and so astonished at seeing me that, for a space, I thought they would never let themselves be rescued, so busy were they weeping for gladness that I had come and for terror lest I should not get safely away again. But at last, when it began to grow dark, we made the sick woman comfortable on a mattress

in the wagon, packed in as much of their household stuff as we dared carry, and set off.

"We had not yet passed the edge of the town, however, when Cousin Betsey set up a great wailing that her bead purse, that had belonged to, I know not how many grandmothers, and that contained five gold pieces, had, in the hurry of departure, been left behind for British soldiers to make way with, a thought far too terrible to endure. So, in my growing folly, I must needs give the reins into Cousin Eliza's hands and tell her to drive on slowly while I slipped back to fetch the purse. Of course I knew well that the risk to our safety was greater than the worth of the money, but, to tell you the honest truth, I had begun to feel that Cousin Betsey's tireless tongue was a travelling companion hard to bear with, and was glad of any excuse to be away from it for a little. Besides, great oaf that I was, I began to feel that my unaided wit was a match for the whole British Army."

Stephen chuckled and then laughed aloud.

"Go on quickly with the tale," he said, as Miles paused, perhaps spent with such unaccustomed flow of speech. "I am anxious to know what occurred next. It must have been a grievous happening, to make you shower yourself with such hard names."

"I reached the house safely enough," went on the unhappy story-teller, "and found the purse upon the table. I opened it to see if the contents were safe and discovered at the bottom, besides the gold, a tiny embroidered copy of General Washington's new flag, with its union jack in the corner and its

thirteen stripes of red and white. Cousin Betsey, loyal soul, had heard of our new banner and had made this one to carry always with her. As I stood with it in my hand, I remembered passing a building used for soldiers' barracks where there was no guard outside and where there was a great sound of revelling and roistering coming from within. So I thought, like a clever lad, how excellent it would be to pin this flag on the outside of the door and write beneath, 'With the compliments of General Washington's Army.' I turned Cousin Betsey's workbox upside down to find a piece of chalk and set off in high glee."

"Ah," exclaimed Clotilde, "how I should like to have seen the faces of the soldiers when they found it!"

"The face to see was mine," said Miles ruefully, "when, just as I was scrawling my impertinent message, a hand fell upon my arm and a voice said:

"'Put that flaunting banner in your pocket, man, and come with me.'

"I turned and recognised the same officer who had looked at me so long and earnestly near the Common. I thought of knocking him down and making a run for it, but such an act would have brought a whole regiment about my ears in a moment, so I could only grind my teeth and submit. He slipped his arm firmly through mine and led me to a house near by, where he unlocked the door and led me upstairs to his room. There he bade me sit down and himself stood looking at me long and in silence. Had his expression been a mocking one, I vow so great was my rage that I would

have sought to slay him on the spot, but he looked only grave and thoughtful. Strange it is, Master Sheffield, but it flashed across my mind that his face was somehow familiar and that, in a certain way, he was like you."

"Like me?" repeated Stephen in amazement, and then laughed again. "Surely I would make a fine figure for a British soldier!"

"He was like you, whatever you may say," Miles affirmed stoutly, "his eyes were yours to the very life. We say in Hopewell 'There is no blue like Sheffield blue,' for the colour and fire of your eyes and your mother's and your sister's are things of which we often speak."

Stephen glanced up quickly at the portrait hanging above the mantel, one of the very few of his rescued possessions that he had brought to the cottage. The picture was of Master Simon, painted before he left England; it showed a dreamy-faced boy with those same wide, grave blue eyes. Margeret Bardwell had had them, and Amos and Alisoun, but none of them quite so like Master Simon's as were Stephen's.

"It is curious," he said at last, "but go on with your tale. If we pause to talk of the colour of eyes we will never come to the end of your adventure."

"When the officer spoke at length," Miles continued, "his words knocked all the wind from the sails of my silly vanity.

"'I have been watching you,' he said, 'ever since you stopped by the Common, and I had no difficulty in recognising you as an officer in the Continental

Army. It was not the first time we had met, however. Do you recollect a night raid last October, when your men made a stand north of Hopewell to the great discomfiture of the soldiers of King George?'

"'What,' I cried, 'are you the officer that escaped?' He nodded. 'Then,' I went on, further rage swelling in my heart, 'you must have had a hand in the burning of that house and garden!'

"'I am glad to say, that was no work of mine,' he answered; 'my division did not join the rest until that ugly task was done. The Commander's orders in the matter were strict and definite but had they been issued to me I fear I would have made some trouble over obeying them. That is not the question now, however. Here are you, a soldier out of uniform, within the enemy's lines, and that means hanging as a spy. What were you doing here beyond decorating His Majesty's barracks with the rebel flag?'

"I explained my errand briefly and cursed the bragging folly that had been my undoing. He interrupted my hot words, however, before I had gone far on that subject.

"'Do you remember,' he said, 'how, when I escaped from that battle where your forces fought to so much greater advantage than ours, there was a certain officer of the rebel army who snatched a gun from one of his men, slipped down a path that he knew and was waiting for me, with rifle in rest, at the turn of the road?'

"'Yes,' I stammered, 'I remember.'

"'And do you recollect how he took careful aim

as I galloped by and then suddenly flung up his weapon and saluted me instead of firing? I remember it well, even to the man's face, for although it was a hurried moment, one notes clearly the countenance of an enemy who is about to take one's life. I was thinking of it when I saw that same officer in huckster's clothes, standing by the Common. And I am thinking of it still'— and here he opened the door —' when I bid that man go free now, to follow Cousin Betsey, who wants his protection more than King George wants his life.'

" I tried to gasp out my thanks, but was too much amazed to speak the half of what I felt. I had thought no one knew of my chance to slay the escaping officer and of my having, at the last moment, no heart to take the life of so brave a man. His face had been partly hidden by his flying cloak and I should not have known him again.

" ' Waste no more time,' he said, cutting short my stammering thanks; ' there are two unprotected women out yonder on the lonely road. Take my grey horse that stands before the door; when you have caught up with your wagon you can turn him loose and he will come home again alone. So go on your way, but I warn you, stay not this time to leave love-tokens for the British Army.'

" You may be sure that I lost no time in carrying out his directions and that Cousin Betsey received her purse in safety. Her complaints and her description of the terrors she had felt over my being gone so long, lasted us for many miles. The sentries permitted us to pass with earnest recommendations that I come soon again with another load

of provisions, and before morning we were safe within our own lines. Cousin Betsey has been spreading through all the country, it seems to me, the tale of our escape and of my heroism, as she calls it. And I must needs be silent under all these praises, for to tell of my real adventures would mean to tell also how I failed in my duty as a soldier and did not capture a fleeing enemy. Ah, but my heart is lighter, now that some one knows how miserably I bungled the whole affair."

Stephen arose, knocked the ashes out of his pipe and came over to put his hand on Miles' shoulder.

"You do well to bemoan your heedless folly," he said, "for you risked much and for very little. None the less you did a brave deed in saving those two women, but, since your Cousin Betsey sings your praises so loudly, I will leave the task of doing you justice, to her. And think not that you failed in your duty when you hesitated to slay a brave man; there is no wrong in an act of plain humanity. I think that we acquit you of those woful charges against yourself. Eh, Clotilde, do we not?"

And most completely and heartily did Clotilde agree that Miles was the most noble soldier in the whole patriot army.

"One satisfaction I did have," Miles said more cheerfully. "When Christmas came and my mother sent me a great hamper of good things, I dared the passage to the house of David Thurston's brother again, and sent by his boy a fine ham and a large, fat goose as an aid to that officer's holiday dinner. I knew not his name, but I could give the lad directions for finding the place where my friend

lodged. And to the goose's leg I fastened a paper that said, 'With the compliments of General Washington's Army.'"

"Do you think that he received it?" asked Clotilde.

Miles grinned.

"I know he did," was his answer, "for, two days after, there was put into my hand a packet containing a toy wooden gallows, such as children use for the hanging in a Punch and Judy show. And to it was fastened a paper saying, 'With the compliments of King George the Third.'"

CHAPTER XV

A MESSAGE FROM MASTER SIMON

IN her laughter over Miles' hearty disgust with himself, Clotilde, for a little time after his visit, forgot to grieve over the ruined garden. But when Spring came and there were no bright daffodils nodding by the gate, when the covering snow melted and showed once more the charred wreckage of the burned house, when the hedges displayed only a few green twigs coming up from the roots, and the linden tree, long after the whole green country was in abundant leaf and blossom, still stood a blackened skeleton against the sky, then her grief awoke afresh.

In the kitchen garden, the apple trees and the row of beehives beneath them had by chance been spared. Yet to see the apple trees blooming alone in a black and desert waste, to watch the bees flying about in bewilderment, looking for flowers that had once yielded such generous honey, was worse, almost, than to have had all perish together. Clotilde had need, through these days, of all her courage and of all Stephen's shrewdly comforting sayings, to keep up even a show of cheerfulness.

Two great events, however, the Spring brought, which were of equal and joyful importance to the

people of Hopewell. One was the abrupt departure from Boston of General Howe and all his soldiers, British and German. Early in March they had embarked upon their war vessels, had hoisted sail and cleared the port of Boston with loudly expressed hopes that they would never be so unlucky as to see it again. Many of those wise prophets who are always ready to tell any one who will listen, just what things are going to happen, protested loudly that the war was over and began to criticise General Washington for not sending his soldier boys home. But, strange to say, this eagerly offered advice seemed to fall unheeded upon the Commander's ears and the Continental forces still remained under arms waiting for the next move.

The other event was the rebuilding of Master Stephen Sheffield's house. By an odd chance of war that brings about so many unexpected happenings, the same hands that had burned it down were busied in building it up again. Many of the Hessian prisoners taken the same night of the burning had been quartered all winter in the Hopewell jail, much to their own discomfort and that of every one else. The village place of imprisonment, very little used of late, was now fairly bursting with the captives of war. The officers had been exchanged, but the German privates remained, a sore responsibility, although it must be owned that they were patient, tractable and showed no eagerness to escape. Those who had them under guard were glad to put their charges to work, while the prisoners themselves were delighted to labour in the open air at a trade in which many of them were skilled. Mus-

tered into the army of some small German ruler, enrolled against their will, bewildered but yet obedient, they had been hired out to fight an enemy of which few of them had ever heard. After fighting that foe conscientiously, thoroughly and to the best of their ability, they were quite as willing, when so ordered, to labour for their captors with the same silent, heavy industry.

Stephen, during his stay in England, had learned to speak German, a language used about the court as much as English. When he went among the toiling workmen and spoke to them in their own tongue, it was pleasant to see the stolid faces light up, to see the men's eyes grow brighter and their hands become more nimble in their enthusiasm to labour for the "gnädige Herr."

In July, when the bells in the town pealed out the thrilling tidings that Congress, in the face of reverses and threatened defeat, had dared to declare the Colonies, "free and independent," amid the cheers of Hopewell there went up many a sturdy German voice. Once it was explained to them what the great news meant, there was no cap tossed higher than theirs and no cheer more earnest than their deep, resounding "Hoch!"

"For," as one of them explained to Stephen, "it is the first time we have dwelt in a country where men dared speak out what they feel, therefore why should we, though we be prisoners, fail to cry our joy with the rest of you?"

And Stephen had smiled and cordially shaken the German's great rough hand.

There was no lack of material for the new dwell-

ing, since that was amply supplied by the ships sent out to raid upon the English commerce. Among them was the *Mistress Margeret,* built by public subscription and bearing the famous mainmast made from King James' Tree. These raiders had brought in more than one brick-laden vessel, carrying its cargo to some Tory planter of Georgia or Carolina, who had planned a new dwelling with no thought of a long-lasting war. The loads of bricks, of tall, white, fluted pillars, carved mantels and door-lintels were sold at auction in the seaport towns of New England and many of them bought by Stephen's agents. Some wealthy Loyalist of the South, no doubt, looked long and anxiously out to sea that year, wondering why the duly ordered material for his new house never came to port and little guessing that, far off in New England, there was rising upon the site of Master Simon's rough little cottage and Roger Bardwell's big white-painted house, a mansion such as had never been seen in that neighbourhood before.

Had this rebuilding meant the outpouring of money needed for other things, Stephen would have lived to the end of the war, and longer, in Samuel Skerry's little cottage. But material, as has been said, was abundant, and many a poor man, beside the Hessians, stood sorely in need of work. Mother Jeanne frowned often over Stephen's threadbare coat and rusty hat, but she could persuade him to spend no single penny upon himself, when all of New England was in want.

"Monsieur pays those idle workmen twice too much," she would storm, for she had become a

privileged character in the household and was suffered to speak her mind with blunt directness when her feelings became too much for her. "He is of such a poverty himself as to his clothes, that, were it not for his gold-headed cane, no one could tell which was master and which was man!"

"Our coats are of a like shabbiness, I own," Stephen would return, untroubled, "but there is one further difference; the man needs the money at this moment and the master does not."

Day by day, therefore, the house went up. The big white stone steps were the same that Roger Bardwell had had put in place, and the wide chimney was that one that Master Simon had built for his first dwelling, but beyond these all was to be new, the walls this time being built of clear-hued mellow brick instead of wood.

"When the house is done," Stephen said to Clotilde, "and all this tramping to and fro is at an end, we will turn our labour to the garden and see what we can make of that," but at this she only shook her head sadly.

"It will never be the same," she sighed. "There are no ship-loads of shrubs and flowers coming from England and those that Master Simon planted have perished forever."

"Be not too sure of that," Stephen answered with a smile, but Clotilde refused to look at the matter hopefully.

By autumn the dwelling was ready for occupation and a splendid half-new, half-familiar place it seemed. Stephen had bought only such material as the ship-owners had to sell and had spent only

such money, in the building, as would help his fellow townsmen. Therefore the house was only half finished, with carving and panelling in one apartment and bare rafters in another, with rough wooden shutters where windows should have been and walls of unsmoothed boards in many of the bedrooms. The big drawing-room was completed, however, with its white cupboards and panelling and long casement windows opening to the east. In the hall a great carved staircase with a white balustrade and mahogany handrail wound up to the second floor. The round window on the landing encircled, like a frame, a far view of rocky capes, scattered islands and broad, blue sea. Here Clotilde loved to kneel upon the cushioned seat and watch for hours the whirling gulls, the blue October sky and the sunlight on white, swiftly-moving sails.

When the word went forth that Master Sheffield's house was at last completed, the doors of Hopewell opened and out came, in long and straggling procession, those household treasures that the friendly souls of the town had risked their lives in rescuing. There were framed pictures, from the huge, heavy portraits down to the little sampler over which Margeret Radpath had pricked her fingers on the very day that first she laid eyes upon Roger Bardwell. There were the old bits of pewter that had belonged to Mistress Radpath when she was a bride, there was the bowl that was Samuel Skerry's unwilling marriage gift, there was the wonderful silver service given to Stephen when on his mission to England. There were rolls of homespun linen sheets, Stephen's own armchair, and Clotilde's little pol-

ished spinning-wheel. Much, of course, had perished in the flames, but so much had been saved that Stephen, Clotilde and Mother Jeanne could only wonder, rejoice and forget what was gone beyond recall. Last of all there stumped up to the door — where the silver knocker set by Paul Revere once more shone resplendent — that same old man who had told Stephen the tale of the burning. Fumbling in his pocket, he brought forth a velvet case which he put into Clotilde's hand.

"Since I am so old and awkward, there was little I could save," he said, "but I spied a cupboard standing open and this within, so I carried it home to be kept safe for you and Master Sheffield. This whole long winter, when there was little fire on my hearth and starvation waiting, seemingly, only just around the corner, I used to get out this treasure and warm myself at the glow of the jewels. And it is proud I am to have something to bring to you when all the others are carrying their offerings hither!"

Clotilde snapped open the cover and found within the diamond star that had been given by the King of France to Stephen and by him to her. She had often thought of it, but always as lost beyond hope of recovery, so she gave, now, a glad cry of surprise and ran to show Master Sheffield that her greatest treasure had come back to her. The man would accept no thanks, nor consider it any merit that, in the midst of such dire poverty, his honesty had never been tempted by the shining stones.

"There would have been a curse on me, and a well deserved one," he said, "had I even thought

of keeping for myself that which belongs to you who have been so good to me."

A great feast took place in Stephen's house, a housewarming where all of Hopewell was made welcome. The occasion, although it should have been one of rejoicing, for was not Master Sheffield safe and sound in his own house again, was tinged with gloom, since the British had taken possession of New York and General Washington's army was in retreat through New Jersey. Louder and louder were growing the criticisms of Washington, while many wiseacres were saying openly that he had not the ability for a Commander-in-Chief, and that Benedict Arnold should have been the man. Others, too, there were who said just as loudly that the war was over and the victory with the English, the same prophets who, six months ago, had wished to disband the army, since America was safe.

At the end of the evening, when the feasting was over and the guests were ready to go, Stephen Sheffield, standing upon the stairway above the heads of all the people, made a speech that many of those who heard forgot not to their dying day. He spoke first of the thanks that he owed them all, and, though his words were few, they were so simple and earnest that every one who had done him a service felt more than worthily repaid.

"But with my thanks," he said, "is coupled a request, for I must ask you for a service greater than any you have yet done me. I beg that you speak no further ill of that heavy-hearted man who leads our armies, who with troops deserting, money lacking, food and clothing scarce and with winter

close upon him, never admits defeat, and will still lead his men to victory. Not because he is merely a friend of mine do I ask you to abstain from evil-speaking of him in my house, but because he is the friend of all of you, fighting for you — and you — and you," here certain of the guests hung their heads for, with unerring finger Stephen had pointed to the worst offenders, " and will you, by your idle words make his task heavier? "

It was a sober company that said good night and filed out through the great doorway. A dozen, at least, of the men present had been in Washington's army, but, having enlisted for only a few months, had come home at the end of that time, vowing that they would risk their lives no longer in a hopeless cause. Among this number was David Thurston, although he had better excuse than the others, since his feeble old mother, who dwelt in Hopewell, was in sore need of his support and aid.

Early the next morning, before it was yet light, there was a tapping at the silver knocker and Clotilde, slipping down with a candle in her hand, opened the door and found David Thurston on the steps. It was a raw, cold November dawn with gusts of rain and a sharp, merciless wind. Yet there stood David and, on the driveway below, mounted on shivering horses, were twelve village lads, muffled in their high-collared homespun coats and fur caps.

" Tell the master when he awakes," said David hurriedly, " that we are off to the wars again, to fight for General Washington, since his need is so great. Say that when we heard Master Sheffield's

words and saw him grown old and broken in this struggle for Liberty, we were ashamed to sit warm and comfortable at home and let others win our battles for us. And, Mistress Clotilde," he added, his voice breaking, "will you look to my poor old mother now and again? I doubt that she will be here when I return, for we are not coming back until every redcoat has been swept from America."

He pressed her hand in a rough, trembling clasp of farewell, strode down the steps, mounted his horse and, followed by the others, rode away into the face of the whistling, sleety wind. Among the group that pressed forward with bent shoulders and bowed heads, Clotilde recognised the broad backs of three of the German prisoners, who had given up their chance of exchange and return to their own homes, and were now to fight, for the first time in their lives perhaps, on a side of their own choosing.

November passed, and December, with still the depressing news of retreat and ever retreat before the overwhelming numbers of the British. Clotilde long remembered that dreary Christmas night when the wind shrieked down Master Simon's chimney and banged and shook at the heavy wooden shutters, while she, Stephen and Mother Jeanne huddled about the fire and tried to smile at Stephen's merry stories and cheerful talk. All three of their hearts were so heavy with thoughts of the struggling army, of freezing soldiers crouching over camp fires, of the desperate struggle against almost hopeless odds, that it was Stephen alone who managed to speak confidently and to see in the blazing fire pictures of hope, victory and peace at last.

On New Year's day came the tidings of that marvellous crossing of the Delaware and the capture of Trenton. People brightened then and began to speak more cheerily. Strange to say, it was only Stephen who shook his head over the news.

"A General who must take such fearful risks as that," he said, "is plainly in such dire necessity that he must win, or lose all. May Heaven help him!"

On an afternoon in April came a messenger, covered to his eyes with splashings of mud, clay and gravel, and bearing a letter from General Washington to Stephen.

"Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York and New England have combined to decorate them," he said, displaying his great jack boots, "but there was naught of bad roads or hidden enemies could stay me on an errand that, so His Excellency said, was desperate in its need for haste. Things have come to a fearful pass with the army!"

Stephen, however, although he read the letter carefully, seemed in no hurry with his reply.

"See that the man is well cared for," he directed Clotilde. "It is too late for him to set forth again to-day, so let him lodge here and receive my answer in the morning."

There was something in his voice, as he spoke, that made Clotilde start and turn, a note of dull, despairing weariness such as she had never before heard from him. She ran to him and put her hand on his arm.

"What is it, oh, what is it, Master Sheffield?" she cried.

"You may read the letter, child," he said, hand-

ing it to her, although with fingers that trembled. "And do my bidding, see that the messenger is fed and rested and treated well. As for me, I must be alone a little; the letter calls for an answer in haste, but I know not — I know not what to say!"

Quickly Clotilde ran to do as Stephen directed and to see that the travel-worn rider was comfortably bestowed in the chimney corner with a hot meal before him. Not until then did she creep to her own room and open the letter. It was short and in General Washington's own hand.

"For the love of God and of our Country," it ran, "send me help if you are able. My army is dwindling daily, and, without new recruits — not a mere handful, nor a few hundreds, but thousands — the cause of Liberty is lost. Many have left whose terms of enlistment were up, hundreds more have deserted on account of the lack of food, of clothing and of the pay that Congress does not send. That I should call upon you, who are already spent with doing so much, is only the proof of my desperate need. If there is aid in the world, it lies with you alone."

Clotilde stood staring blankly out of the window, the letter clutched in her hand. General Washington confessing that he was at the end of his resources, Master Sheffield finally giving way to despair and owning that he knew not what to do! Could there be fuller proof that all was at an end? So the war was lost then: the sacrifice of Master Simon's garden, all the suffering, all the bloodshed, all had been in vain! What a black, black world it was.

She slipped on her blue cloak, drew up its hood and ran downstairs and out-of-doors. As she passed the study, she saw Stephen sitting in his arm-chair, his face bowed in his hands; she heard something like a groan sound through the hall as she softly closed the outer door. Once she had been accustomed to look for help and comfort in the garden, but now it was only a dreary waste that made her even more sick at heart, as she hurried across it and out through the white gate. Beyond the village, among the tall, silent trees of the forest, perhaps she could find a little peace and soothe her whirling wits into forming some plan to help her dear Master Sheffield.

She trudged down the rough country lane, the high Spring wind ruffling her hair and finally blowing back the hood of her cloak. The way was muddy and full of little rippling pools, where she could see reflected the blue sky and sailing white clouds. The hedges were budding and the grass on the sunny banks growing green, and a meadow lark, perched upon a gate post swelled his yellow breast and sang a song that was all for her. In spite of herself, she began to be a little comforted and to feel some of the gladness of the growing world, although heavy trouble still lay like lead upon her heart.

Leaving the lane, where it skirted the wood, she plunged into the forest itself. The dead leaves and old, withered brambles were almost knee deep and were soaking wet, sharp twigs reached out and caught her hair and hood with crooked fingers. But the wind still blew gaily among the treetops and

swaying anemones and blue-eyed hepaticas smiled up cheerfully at her as she passed along.

Only by chance was it that her eye caught a distant glimpse of flaunting yellow, so bright that it drew her attention even from those absorbing thoughts of Stephen, General Washington and Miles. The little clearing that she was about to pass showed, there at her right, such a gleam of brilliant colour as no wild Spring flowers ever could display. In spite of her preoccupation, she was obliged to turn aside and see what it could be. Bending back the bushes, she peeped into a little glade, and caught her breath with delight and wonder at what she saw.

At the foot of a high, dark, granite boulder, and all down the slope of woodland grass that dipped toward her, grew a mass of yellow daffodils. How could they have come there, by what means had they escaped from civilisation and bloomed here in such joyous, reckless profusion? Their yellow heads rocked and curtseyed in the wind, their eager faces were turned to the sunshine that, at the very moment of her coming, looked out from behind a cloud and transformed the yellow petals into gleaming gold. Suddenly Clotilde dropped upon her knees and flung her arms about the nearest clump.

"You darlings," she cried, "you darlings, you are from Master Simon's garden!"

There could, indeed, be no other explanation for the flowers. She knew well that Master Simon, when he had more plants than he and his neighbours needed, often set them out by wayside springs or in

nooks and corners of the wood where they were seen through the years only by the peering Indians or the wild wood animals. But surely it must have been a hundred years ago that he, with spade and basket full of nodding yellow flowers or tight-jacketed brown bulbs, had come to set out this little garden that was to grow and spread and fill the glade with sunshine long after he was dead. Wars had raged past them, three generations had come and gone, Indians and wild things had disappeared, forever, from these forest hills, but still the flowers bloomed and faded and bloomed again, silent proof that the work of such hands and hearts as Master Simon's never died. Clotilde, with a joyous laugh, began quickly to gather great sheafs of the daffodils and to pile them high in her apron.

Meanwhile Stephen had sat long in motionless silence but at last raised his head from his hands and looked hopelessly about him. Slowly he reached to take up his pen, dipped it in the ink and then sat staring at the blank white paper before him.

"To His Excellency, General George Washington, Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Armies," he wrote at last, and then paused long again.

"Can I tell him," he finally said aloud, "can I say that the struggle is over and America can do no more? Two years have we fought bravely, but can a handful of scattered Colonies hope longer to resist a mighty Empire? Ah, God knows, God knows!"

With a long, dreary sigh he dipped his pen in the ink again and began to write.

Suddenly a far door flew open with a bang, feet

came running down the hall, his study door burst open and in came Clotilde. Her apron and her arms were full of golden flowers that spilled from her hands, dropped over table and floor, were tumbled upon Stephen's knees and, so it seemed, filled the whole room with yellow sunshine.

"See, Master Sheffield," she cried, "they are for you — from Master Simon!"

Stephen passed a trembling hand across his forehead.

"From Master Simon?" he repeated, bewildered. "My child, what can you mean?"

With much incoherence and several beginnings at the wrong end, Clotilde managed to explain how she had been walking in the wood, lonely, sorrowful and in utter despair, how she had come upon the flowers and how she had felt as though a friendly hand had been stretched out across the hundred years to cheer and comfort her. Stephen listened wondering.

"Master Simon!" he said at last in a shaking voice. "To think that in this dark hour I had forgot Master Simon and his roofs of gold!"

As he still sat, looking silently at the yellow blossoms, Clotilde stooped to lift a paper from the floor.

"Oh, dear," she said ruefully, "here is your letter that I swept down with the flowers and see, it is all blotted and wet through my carelessness!"

"Never mind," returned Stephen, sitting bolt upright, and taking his pen again, "bring me another sheet for I have a different message to write now. Send that man of General Washington's to me for I will despatch him to-day after all. And do you, my child, and Mother Jeanne, pack my clothes and bid

Jason and Michael to make ready for a journey."

"A journey," faltered Clotilde, "a journey in this wild, wet Spring weather?"

"Yes, a journey," he repeated firmly. "I am going forth to gather men for General Washington's army."

"Oh, no, no!" cried the girl in alarm, but she went to do his bidding, nevertheless.

A few minutes later, Mother Jeanne, with her gravest face and most severe manner came bustling in.

"What is this of Monsieur's journey?" she said. "It must have been that I did not hear aright. It will cost Monsieur his life, and that is a life we cannot spare."

"Woman," replied Stephen with a sternness so new that Mère Jeanne was utterly taken aback and stood staring at him open-mouthed. "So far America has given to this war but what she could spare, now we must all give more than that. Go I must, and I will look to you and to Clotilde to take care of the poor of Hopewell until I shall come back."

Mother Jeanne hesitated a moment, then dropped a curtsey as her brown face wrinkled into a proud smile.

"Monsieur may rely on us to do our duty," she said.

CHAPTER XVI

THE HAND ON THE LATCH

A BROWN-FACED pedlar, his heavy leathern pack sagging wearily from his shoulders, took his shambling way down the winding streets of Hopewell and, knocking at every door, offered for sale his stock of needles, thread, bobbins and silk laces. Although at other times such a trade was apt to be brisk and few housewives generally failed to bring forth their pennies and sixpences, now he was met with frowning looks and peremptory shakes of the head, wherever he stopped.

"We have no business with your like," said one old woman, scarcely pausing in her spinning as his stooped shadow fell across her threshold, "we know your real errand and will have none of it."

He next made a detour across the fields and came to Samuel Skerry's little cottage where Clotilde still used the loom and kept her spinning-wheels and where she and Mother Jeanne were at work that morning. If he had any doubts as to the reason of his cold reception at the other houses, all such were swept away when the old Frenchwoman stood up in the doorway and spoke her mind.

"Begone from here," she cried, "think you that there is one of us who has not heard of the business

that you are about, that you, a skulking Tory, and a dozen like you are marching over the whole countryside, telling people that the cause of America is lost and warning them against enlisting in General Washington's army? You can go back and tell your master, Andrew Shadwell, that our General could go forth alone with his sword in his hand and drive all the redcoat armies and German hirelings and Tory Loyalists from the country. But he shall have no need so to do, for his army is growing every day, thanks to the recruits New England is sending him. It will not be long before they and our brave General will force you and your like to flee beyond our borders. So, good sir, go ply your trade elsewhere."

The man made no attempt to stem this tide of eloquence, spoken half in English and half in French, but apparently entirely understood by the object at which it was directed. He stole away without attempting any reply, his shifty little black eyes first taking in every detail of the cottage and all that was to be seen within it. His look, Clotilde thought, was one of most evil threatening. She drew a breath of relief when at last his bent form and great pack disappeared at the turn of the lane.

"Do you think it was quite wise to anger the man so, Mère Jeanne?" she questioned, as the older woman, very red in the face, came back to her seat by the loom.

"It is time that some one told those rascals that we understand their evil work and will have none of it," replied Mère Jeanne heatedly. "New England is full of them, spreading false reports of lost bat-

tles, disaster to our armies and the hopelessness of further effort. That Andrew Shadwell is at the bottom of all, yet no one can prove his part in it. Yes, I did right to speak just so to him."

"I am not so sure," returned Clotilde gravely. "I liked not the look he gave us before he turned away, and do you know, Mère Jeanne, I think he was of our race."

"I thought of that too," said the old woman, "and I blushed for our kind, although we need not call him a fellow-countryman. He is one of those renegades who are half French, half Indian and wholly the Evil One's. The English have been trying to make use of them, but little good will come of it. That poor-spirited animal can never do us harm!"

"I trust not," said Clotilde with a sigh, and went back to her work. There was so much to be done, it was scarcely worth while wasting time in dread of what might happen. Too much was already happening every moment.

It was true that, whatever highways and byways the Tory pedlars travelled in New England, their efforts against the cause of Liberty were of little avail. No matter where they went, Stephen Sheffield had either been before them or came after to undo their work. People listened to him eagerly wherever he went; he stopped at cottage doors, he spoke in market places, he held meetings at country cross-roads and convinced men everywhere that now, if ever, they must throw all they had into the struggle for freedom. And everywhere men heard him, they turned away to say good-bye to their wives, to

shoulder their old muskets and set forth to join General Washington.

"Alack that I am too old to go," said one richly dressed and elderly gentleman who stood listening to Stephen's speech before the door of an inn. "I would indeed that I were a young man again!"

"If you can not go, you can give," responded Stephen quickly. "How can these lads go to the war unless we at home promise to see that their wives and children do not starve?"

The old gentleman looked at Stephen's shabby coat, the one over which Mother Jeanne had wrung her hands even last year, and at his threadbare ruffles and said nothing, but went home to do his part. He remembered that before the war the Sheffield estate had been called the wealthiest in Massachusetts.

"I verily believe that Stephen Sheffield would melt the head off his cane if he thought it would help," he chuckled as he unlocked his money box.

People who knew Stephen and were aware of how frail he was at the outset of his campaign, could now see that he was worn to little more than the ghost of a man, fired and kept alive only by the passion of one purpose. Even strangers and the rough-mannered country folk could see how he was spending his last strength in this mighty effort for the success of the war.

"You may think," he said in one of his speeches to a gathering of men before a blacksmith's shop, "that it scarce seems right that I should ask you to go into danger when I stay behind myself."

"Nay," returned one of the men bluntly, "it is

not hidden from our eyes, Master Sheffield, that you too are laying down your life in the cause."

Stephen answered him with a happy smile.

"It is the least that any of us can do," he said, "but I am hoping that Heaven will grant it me to see the end of the war."

To Clotilde, Stephen, when he went away, had left a heavy task.

"Once we had a few poor people in Hopewell to care for," he told her, "now all are in want and you must do your best to see that they do not suffer."

So Clotilde, young as she was, took up the burden and carried it well. Master Simon's empty garden was ploughed from end to end and planted with cabbages, turnips, beets, potatoes, anything that would give food to the hungry and could be stored away for the winter. Wheat and barley and rye now grew where once a smooth strip of greensward had extended down to the harbour's edge, while the sturdy women and growing boys of Hopewell were taught to turn their bits of land to similar account.

"We will let the men see that we can bring in as good a harvest as they," Clotilde told the women, whereupon Nature seemed to bend herself to helping their efforts by giving them a fair and prosperous season.

All through the summer and autumn, Stephen's time, for the most part, was spent in his journeyings throughout New England. Prospects began to brighten as Washington's army gathered strength. In October came the wonderful news of Burgoyne's surrender back in the wilderness of the Hudson valley, where he had been harried and driven up and

down the whole summer long. Stephen chanced to be at home when the tidings came.

"Yes," he said with a smile, as he and Clotilde sat in the porch talking of the good news. "Washington made the victory possible by holding back the British troops that were to have aided Burgoyne, Benedict Arnold brought about the surrender by his gallant fight in the forest, and now General Gates receives the British Commander's sword with a bow, and apparently all the credit is his. That is the way of war."

"Will this mean the end of the fighting, do you think?" asked Clotilde. "They are saying in the village that King George will see now that there is no hope for him."

"Bless you, my child," answered Stephen, "this is the first time, probably, that His Majesty, King George the Third has fully realised that the war has begun."

They sat there for some time in the falling darkness, both busy with their own thoughts. Finally Stephen, with a visible effort, spoke again.

"There is a rich merchant in Boston, Clotilde, who desires to — to buy the lower half of our garden, that strip of land that goes down to the water's edge."

"Oh, no," exclaimed the startled girl. "Surely you would never sell it! Is it not enough that the trees and flowers are gone, must we also lose the land itself? What can a man in far-off Boston want with our garden? Oh, how can you speak of such a thing?"

"He offers what he calls a good price," pursued Stephen steadily. "He does not know, poor stupid fellow, that all the wealth in the world could never repay us for the loss of what once belonged to Master Simon."

"Then you will not part with it?" she asked hopefully.

Stephen paused before he spoke again.

"There are times," he said at last; "times like these, when even that which one would not sell for all the gold on earth must be freely given. What Master Simon left to us seems well-nigh sacred, but the welfare of our neighbours, is not that sacred too? People are suffering, some are starving, and with every year that the war drags on the poverty grows worse. My own fortune has been swept away by the hazards of the time; a moment is very close when people will come to me for help and I will have naught to give them. Shall a strip of meadow land, a blossoming hedge and a memory of Master Simon be more to us than our love for our people?"

"No," agreed Clotilde, but with a sob; "no, you are right and he would never have wished us to keep it. But oh, the very thought of it breaks my heart!"

On Stephen's next journey to Boston the transfer was made and a good half of Master Simon's garden passed into the hands of Ephraim Paddock, the wealthiest and most close-fisted man in all of Massachusetts. Having in view the building of docks and warehouses at the water's edge, a plan that could not well be carried out at once, he graciously granted, as

part of the terms of sale, permission that Stephen Sheffield make use of the land until building should begin. Therefore the meadow still yielded its harvest for the feeding of the poor, while its purchase price was spread broadcast to give clothing and shelter to those who were in need.

November came, and with it began that season of bitter and piercing cold, to be known, as long as history books tell the tale, as the Valley Forge winter, the most severe that America had known in nearly a hundred years. The snow fell early and lay so deep and so long that people began to wonder if Spring were ever to come again. Never before had such black and destroying frosts been known, so that, had not the women and children brought in an abundant harvest, had not the wheat sheaves been full and golden and the shocks of corn piled high in the barns, the time would have been a desperate one indeed.

Yet none of those at home had leisure for complaint; the thoughts of all were centered upon the little dauntless American army, those gaunt determined soldiers shivering among the hills and ravines of Valley Forge. Would they come through the winter with strength enough left ever to fight again? Would the warm, comfortable, well-fed British army leave its safe shelter in Philadelphia and sally forth to destroy them at one blow? Time only could tell and time dragged, oh, so slowly, as the winter months went by.

The roads of New England were so deep in snow, the cold so intense and so terrible that, through the midwinter, Stephen was forced to forego his jour-

neyings. At the end of January, however, a difficulty arose that haled him forth again. Andrew Shadwell, the wealthy and influential Tory who dwelt in the next town, had gathered about him a considerable company of his own kind, the number beginning to grow so great that their presence was a threat against the peace of the community. People said that the nest of Loyalists was plotting all sorts of evil, and demanded that the enemy be driven out. The Tories, in turn, loudly complained that they were persecuted and had done no wrong. Each party was afraid of the other and neither dared to move first. It was to confer with the authorities in Boston in this matter, and to try for some peaceable settlement of the trouble, that Stephen set out one cold, glittering January morning, when the dry snow creaked under the horses' hoofs, and their breath rose in twin columns of steam as they pawed and snorted before the door.

"I have no reluctance in leaving matters in your hands," he said to Clotilde, as he bade her good-bye in the hall.

"I will do what I can," she answered, "although the best thing that I could accomplish would be to keep you at home."

"No, no, child, there is no danger in this journey," he said, "but, should this brewing trouble break out while I am gone — well, well, there is small use in such misgivings! I will be back again in four days and little can happen in that time."

Clotilde watched him ride away through the clear, keen, frosty air and wished, for the hundredth time, that she were a man and could go with him.

"What are spinning and weaving," she sighed aloud, "and sewing and baking, beside what men can do?"

But spinning and weaving and baking must be accomplished if the war were to go on and the patriot soldiers be clothed and fed, so she ran quickly into the house, tucked up her sleeves, put on her big apron and began the labours of the day.

Two evenings later, just as the early winter dark had begun, there came marching up the long driveway to the house, a little band of blue-coated soldiers. Their young Lieutenant bore a letter from Stephen, explaining that these men, stationed at Salem, had been sent forward at once, but if there were no immediate disturbance near Andrew Shadwell's, they were to await the coming of a larger body of troops from Boston. He begged that Clotilde would see to it that the men supped well before they went on to the empty farm-house a mile or two from Hopewell, where it had been arranged that they camp for the night.

There was much hurrying and scurrying, you may be sure, in the getting ready of an abundant meal for so many hungry fighting-men, a great clattering of dishes and stirring of pots. Huge fires roared up every chimney in the house while the men gathered close about the hearths to warm their cold hands and half frozen feet.

"Men say there is surely trouble to come over these rascal Tories," said the Lieutenant, as he sat in Stephen's chair at the head of the table and eyed joyfully the smoking platter that Clotilde set down before him. "It is even rumoured that Andrew

Shadwell has been petitioning the British Commander to send a company of redcoats to escort him and his friends out of the country. He knows that, as it is, if he tries to escape the whole neighbourhood will be upon him like a nest of hornets. But the English soldiers have too much to do elsewhere, and, influential as our friend Andrew is, I doubt much if they will listen to his plea. Certainly no such measures can be taken for some time."

When at last the grateful guests, warmed, dry, well fed and greatly cheered in heart, had marched away and the remains of the supper had been cleared from the board, Clotilde bethought her of a task that had been nearly forgotten in the hurry and excitement of the soldiers' coming. A great bale of woollen cloth, for the making of army coats, was to be sent from Hopewell next day, but her share of the weaving had, in the press of other things, been left unfinished on the loom in Samuel Skerry's cottage. Only a yard remained to be woven, therefore, she decided, she could slip over to the little house and finish the work that it might be carried to the Town Hall in the morning. Leaving word for Mère Jeanne, who was used to her labouring late in the weaving-room and would not lie awake for her, she wrapped herself in her old cloak and slipped out into the white, silent night.

Old Jason heard the door creak, came hurrying out to remonstrate against her going alone and finally insisted on following her across the fields to the shoemaker's house. Here he built a great fire on the hearth in the workroom, drew the curtains close and sat down to wait, while Clotilde climbed

to the high bench before the loom and presently filled the whole cottage with the monotonous sound of the swinging heddle.

"Jason," she said at last, seeing that the old man was worn out by the unwonted business of the day and was drowsy and nodding in his chair, "there is no need of your waiting here. I have worked in this place at night a score of times and have come to no harm. Go home and to bed: I have the key of the little side door and will come just so soon as this web is done."

"Yes, Mistress," answered Jason, rising obediently, too sleepy either to reason or object. He stumbled out, closing the door behind him, and left Clotilde alone to a silence broken only by the crackling of the fire, the whirring of the shuttle and the creaking of the loom.

"I suppose I should get down and lock the door after him," she reflected; but just at that moment a knotted thread caught her attention and held it until, presently, she forgot all about the big iron key sticking, unturned, in the lock.

She worked on busily, so absorbed in the finishing of her task that she had no thought of time. She was singing a little song to herself as she pressed the treadle and flung the shuttle back and forth, she was thinking of Stephen who must be already on his way back from Boston, she was thinking of Miles in his little wind-swept, bark-roofed hut at Valley Forge.

At last she brought her weaving to an end, cut off the length of cloth that she needed and was climbing down from her seat holding the great roll in her

arms. She was still singing her little song when, she scarcely knew why, she stopped in the middle of a word with a sudden catching at her throat.

"It is nothing. It is nothing. Why should I be afraid?" she said to herself over and over again.

None the less her heart was beating so loud that it almost drowned the slight noise of footsteps in the snow outside the door, and the sound of a hand fumbling at the latch.

CHAPTER XVII

PRISONER OF WAR

THE man who pushed open the door and stepped across the threshold was not, after all, of so very terrible an aspect, at least so Clotilde sought to reassure herself. His high boots were caked with mud and snow and his big grey cloak was gathered close about him. His voice, when he addressed her was gruff and heavy, although it appeared to be with an effort and in spite of breathless impatience that he managed to speak quietly.

"Can you tell me, little Mistress," he said, "where a man named Andrew Shadwell bides?"

"Why, yes," replied Clotilde readily, much relieved by his peaceable tone, "he lives in the next —"

She stopped abruptly. The man had chanced to lift his arm, showing, under his cloak, a braided cuff and a strip of scarlet sleeve. A British soldier — and here!

"Well?" he demanded sharply as she paused. "Where does he dwell?"

"I will not tell you," returned Clotilde with spirit. "I have no information for a soldier of King George."

The man stepped forward with an angry exclamation, but was interrupted by the entry of one of his

comrades. This second visitor she recognised at once as the Governor's messenger who had sat by Stephen Sheffield's fire and talked to her of the coming of the war. He, for the moment, seemed to have no recollection of their previous meeting.

"Well, Merton," questioned the newcomer, "have you any information? The Captain says that if you can find out nothing, you are to come on at once, since delay is worse than ignorance of the road. That rascal of a half-breed pedlar is here without; he insists that we can get news at this cottage, although he fears, for some reason, to come in himself."

"I could get information enough if only this obstinate maid would speak," replied the other. "It remains but to be seen how quickly I can persuade her."

He seized Clotilde roughly by the arm and, dropping all pretence of friendliness, cried in a voice that struck terror to her heart:

"Now, young Mistress, will you tell or shall I make you?"

With a convulsive effort, Clotilde jerked herself free.

"No!" she cried, undaunted.

"Come," remonstrated Merton's companion, "do the girl no harm; it is no part of a soldier's duty to bully a woman. Wait, I will bring the Captain to question her."

Clotilde, with a sinking heart, saw him go out, but she felt no lessening of her determination. She began to see that these men were members of a British force, come at Andrew Shadwell's call to guard

the Tories out of the country. Suppose they should meet that little company of Colonial soldiers, what could result but utter disaster for the Americans? They were encamped so near, they were so few in number, the situation looked very desperate to her whirling mind. There was a chance that she might slip out and run through the snow to warn them. As the thought came to her she made an involuntary movement toward the back door of the cottage. But the watchful Merton's sharp little eyes divined her purpose quickly.

"Think not to befool a British soldier so easily as that," he mocked as, with one stride, he stepped between her and the door. He tried the lock, found it already fastened and grinned with satisfaction as he withdrew the key. "We will have no slipping out in that direction," he said firmly. "Now tell me where dwells Andrew Shadwell, and his gang of Loyalists, as they call themselves. Is it in the next house, or street, or town? Come, speak up, I say."

As she stood, her hand clutching the back of the big chair to steady herself, Clotilde wondered if he could see how she was trembling. She was scarcely able to control her voice but she managed, by a mighty effort to keep it from shaking as she answered:

"I will tell you nothing."

She swallowed chokily with a dry throat, but she turned her head away and gazed indifferently into the fire. Her action put the final touch to Merton's fury.

"We will see as to that!" he said.

"Here, what is this?" cried a new voice suddenly at the door.

The young officer who entered was dark-cloaked like the others, but trimmer, straighter and of a more commanding presence. Clotilde gave him one startled look and then glanced, almost without knowing it, up at the portrait of Master Simon that still hung above the mantel. How like the officer's eyes were to those in the picture and to Stephen Sheffield's. She remembered Miles' saying of:

"There is no blue like Sheffield blue!"

This, then, was the man who had saved her comrade in Boston, the same that she had seen upon that early morning at the crossroads, riding past like whirlwind on his great, grey horse.

"What are you doing with this maid, Merton?" asked the officer sternly. "Stand back from her."

The soldier growled something between his teeth and sulkily obeyed.

"We would but know where to seek Andrew Shadwell," went on the Captain courteously to Clotilde. "Surely there is no harm in telling us that!"

She stared at him stonily and deigned to make no answer. She was attempting to feel anger at one who could look so much like her dear Master Sheffield and yet could draw his sword in the cause against Liberty. But it was hard to resist the appeal of those earnest, friendly eyes.

"You see," commented Merton, "the maid is just as stubborn as are all of these backwoods folk that call themselves patriots. You will get nothing from her by gentleness."

Through the door, that had been left open, came a

low, whining voice speaking in rapid French, and round the edge of the doorpost peered the dark face of the half-breed pedlar.

"There are but women here," he said, "an old dame who has a tongue like a flail and this young Mademoiselle. It is the best place to learn, not only the road to M'sieur Shadwell's, which I have missed in this wilderness of snow, but also where lies that handful of rebel troops that we have heard are encamped in the neighbourhood. There are red-coated men enough here to take them twice over."

The Captain, stepping to the threshold, answered the man in a low voice and in his own tongue.

"Your task was to guide this expedition to the Loyalist headquarters, and not to lose your bearings at the first turning. Yet, as I have been once over the road myself, perhaps I can find the way again. What I wished most to have you discover was the place of encampment of the American troops."

The French pedlar interrupted quickly with some words that she was not able to hear, although she could guess their purport from the officer's answer.

"You need not fear so greatly for the safety of your precious skin. The Americans are so few that they can only harm us if they cut off our return to our vessel in the harbour; could we but have the chance of surprising them, they would be quite helpless in the face of our numbers. Yet I should rather leave them unmolested and accomplish our errand as quietly as possible. I do not care to risk good lives in the rescue of a rascal like your master, Andrew Shadwell."

He turned back into the room and spoke in English to the two soldiers.

"We may as well go on," he said, with a visible effort to make it appear that their errand was only a casual one. "We owe this maid an apology for troubling her with questions that are of no great moment. You must pardon us, my Mistress."

"I could find out all we want to know," growled Merton, "if you would but leave me alone with her for a little. Or," he added hopefully, "there may be some one else here to ask."

While the Captain was talking with the pedlar, the other soldier had tramped up the narrow stairs that led from this room to those overhead, and was now coming down again after having searched the tiny sleeping quarters above.

"There is no one else in the house," he announced. "We may as well cease to frighten the young Mistress and go upon our way."

They were all three moving toward the door, when the pedlar, who was still peeping furtively into the room, cried to them to stop.

"Wait," he exclaimed, in French. "This young Mademoiselle cannot be left here to run with the news of our coming and alarm the town. Monsieur, the Captain, will pardon me if I say that it would be wrong. I saw her face change a moment ago, at the last words we spoke together and it is my belief that she heard and understood all you said. If she did, then can she betray us the moment our backs are turned. Ah, look, look at her eyes, she is pretending ignorance but cannot hide that she understands."

In spite of herself, the colour rose in Clotilde's cheeks. She was not actress enough to conceal her excitement over what she had heard. Oh, for a chance to run through the wood and give warning to the American soldiers!

"Is this true?" cried the officer. "Have you indeed understood all that we have said?"

"Ah, I remember now," exclaimed Merton's comrade suddenly. "I could not recollect where I had seen the little maid before, but I mind me now that it was at the great house over yonder where she and an old woman talked together in French and told me that they were both Acadians. Of course she understood!"

The brows of the young officer were knit in troubled perplexity.

"Is it true that you are French?" he asked.

"Yes," answered Clotilde, who saw no use in further attempt at concealment; "yes, I am an Acadian and understand the French tongue as readily as English."

"That is a misfortune for both of us," he returned gravely, "for how, then, if you know our plan and our errand, can I leave you to go free? I was a fool to speak so openly, but you are the first I have yet seen in the colonies whose education included French. Tell, me, will you, as a prisoner of war, give me your parole not to act against us, not to warn the people of our being here? I am certain that I can trust you if you will but give me your word."

Clotilde regarded him with unmelting hostility.

"I will give you no such promise," she said stead-

ily, " and I will also do my utmost to aid my cause against yours."

Her tone was so final that there seemed little use in further argument.

" Very well," said the Captain, " then we must leave you here, a prisoner. You have the key to that further door, Merton? Give it to me, and go out to tell the men to march on."

The French pedlar slipped away into the darkness, the two soldiers went out and closed the door, but the Captain did not follow immediately. He was bringing fresh wood for the fire from the cupboard in the corner and was measuring the candles on the mantel shelf to see how long they had to burn. It was plain that he had no liking for his duty as jailer and was anxious that his prisoner should not suffer.

" These should last until morning," he said when he had examined the candles, " and by that time we will be far away and people from the next house will surely come to find you. Will they not? " he repeated when she failed to answer.

His face was so full of unhappy anxiety that, angry and frightened as she was, Clotilde could not refuse to give him a little comfort.

" Yes, I think they will," she said stiffly and relapsed once more into silence.

He piled high the logs and faggots on the hearth so that the fire blazed up into abundant light and warmth. She could not help noticing what a really fine face he had as it showed so clearly in the red glow when he stooped to blow the bellows. He looked about to see if there was aught else that he

could do for her comfort and seemed disappointed to find there was nothing. For Clotilde, suddenly remembering the Puritan weaver who had bound his enemy to the armchair and then sat singing at the loom the whole night through, had decided that his example was a worthy one and had climbed up to the bench again and sat throwing her shuttle and singing her song as though the young officer were a hundred miles away. She seemed not to see him as he tried the back door, examined the barred windows and finally, taking up his cloak, turned to go. She did not even look round, although she knew that he hesitated, and then that he paused with his hand on the latch to speak again.

"I am so sorry, little Mademoiselle," he said simply.

She made no answer, nor even ceased her singing, but flung the shuttle swiftly as he opened the door and went out into the rising storm. Quick as she was, the sound of her swinging heddle did not come in time to drown the grating noise of the key as it turned in the lock.

For some moments after he was gone she tried to work steadily, then suddenly dropped her shuttle in a tangle of threads, leaned her head against the heavy frame of the loom and burst into bitter tears. She heard as she sat there, the sound of feet tramping past on the creaking snow, a dozen, a score, fifty, a hundred perhaps or many more. The sound came back to her on the gusts of the rising wind. On this wild night the expedition had a good chance of skirting Hopewell unnoticed and accomplishing its errand undisturbed.

She sat there sobbing for some time, first weeping wildly then wearily and in despair. Presently she slipped down from the bench, tried both the doors and the windows and at last, carrying one of the candles, climbed the stairs to see if escape were possible through one of the upper windows. It was as she had feared however, the heavy wooden shutters had been nailed in place when the sleeping rooms had been abandoned, and no effort of hers could force them open. She went down again, opened one of the windows that looked toward the great house and tried to call for help. The roaring wind swept the words from her lips so quickly that she scarce could hear the cry herself. She could not even see the other house, for every light in it had long since been put out. There was no hope that any one there would miss her before morning, for only Jason knew of her not being at home and he, she was well aware, would sleep until midday unless forcibly awakened. She turned back to begin her weaving again, but found herself suddenly too worn out for further labour; instead she crept into the big chair by the fire and sat there, limp and weary, her hands lying idle in her lap.

She watched long the dancing firelight as it flickered back and forth on the low heavy-beamed ceiling. One of the candles sputtered and went out, but the other burned steady in its copper candlestick although its light seemed suddenly to have become very feeble and tiny in the midst of all those moving shadows. The ever rising wind roared down the chimney and made the faggots flare up, break apart and fall quickly into glowing coals. The white birch

log, however, burned faithfully and cast a pleasant warmth over her as she sat in the big chair.

She was thinking of the soldiers marching away into the storm; she wondered if they would accomplish their errand safely; she hoped they would — she hoped they would not. She thought of the young Captain, of his bravery when he had escaped alone after all his comrades had surrendered, of his kindness to Miles, of the gentleness of his voice when he said, "I am so sorry, little Mademoiselle." Her heart burned with anger when she thought of his leaving her in such a plight, it melted again at the remembrance of how like he was to Stephen and Master Simon. One moment she wished he might be attacked and taken by the American troops, the next she pictured him lying somewhere on the snowy road, wounded and helpless, and she shivered at the thought.

The fire burned low at last and the room grew very cold. She wrapped her cloak about her and tried walking up and down the room to keep warm, but found herself so weary that she was forced to sit in the chair again, half frozen as she was. The last candle dwindled down into its candlestick, flared high once, then glimmered and went out. The room was in darkness save for two vague grey blots that showed where the windows were. The wind that had proved the friend of the English soldiers and that had dealt so treacherously with her by burning out her fire, had now dropped and all was so still that she could hear the creaking of the branches of the trees outside and the soft pat-pat against the window of the still falling snow.

She must have dozed at last, stiff and uncomfortable as she was, for it was a long time later that she started suddenly wide awake. She saw then that daylight had come upon her unawares, that the windows showed now the wide, white fields outside, and that all the strange shadowy shapes about the dusky room were beginning to show familiar forms of table, spinning-wheel and loom. It must have been the sound of footsteps on the door-stone that aroused her, for even as she opened her eyes she saw that the door was opening and some one was coming in. Dazed, bewildered by her sudden waking, scarcely knowing where she was, she sat staring at the dark figure that strode across to her and leaned over the great chair.

"Little Mademoiselle," said the Captain's voice, "is it true that you are still here and safe?"

"You — you came back!" she gasped up at him in uncomprehending astonishment. "Was there a battle? Did you find our soldiers?"

"There has been no fighting," he answered cheerfully, as he fumbled with stiff fingers, trying to lift the cloak that had slipped from her shoulders. "We did not find your fellow-patriots, nor did they find us, so we were well enough content. The storm stood us in good stead, for all the good people of your village and the next were sleeping so soundly, with doors and windows barred and feather beds pulled over their heads, that no one heard us go by and we brought away Andrew Shadwell and his friends with never a living soul to say us nay."

"But where have your soldiers gone?" she asked still bewildered, for there was no sound outside and

she could see through the window that the fields and road were empty.

"They are embarking at the cove, five miles from here, where lies the ship that is to carry them safely away, now that our errand is safely done. It was a most unwelcome one and fell to my lot only because I had been through this country-side before. And when all was over I could no longer bear the thought of a brave little maid sitting here all alone in the dark and cold, so I came back — that is all. I will see that you come safely to your house and then go back to join my men."

He helped her to her feet, but she could hardly stand, so stiff and benumbed was she and shivering so from head to foot. He put her cloak about her, and then his own great heavy one whose warm folds felt welcome indeed around her shaking shoulders. He opened the door and they came out together into the still, white cold of the winter morning. Across the field toward the big house the line of the deeply-trodden path still showed under the drifted snow. Clotilde regarded it with dismay.

"I did not remember that it was so far!" she cried involuntarily. There was almost a sob in her voice as, weak and aching, she thought of toiling that long way through the snow.

"Poor, brave little Mistress, is it too much for you at last?" said the Captain. "Since you are very small and I am very big, there is a simple and speedy way for you to cross the field."

He took her up in his arms and stepped off the doorstep into a deep white drift.

Far over toward the highroad, the Captain's grey horse was tied to a branch of the hedge. In the silence Clotilde could hear him pawing the snow and, a moment later, raise his voice in a clear, shrill whinny.

"What can ail him?" the Captain wondered aloud, but Clotilde, raising her head from the folds of the muffling cloak, guessed the reason at once.

"He hears horses in the lane above," she said. "Hark! can you not hear them coming? Oh, put me down, put me down, you are not safe here, that scarlet coat of yours can be seen a mile away!"

Without his cloak, the officer was indeed a distinct and unmistakable mark against the white snow, but that fact did not seem to disconcert him.

"I will carry you to the gap in the hedge, the way from there is easier for you to walk," he said, and strode forward up the buried path.

Clotilde was in an agony of anxiety long before he set her down. As they reached the hedge she looked up through the garden and saw the white gate swing open and five men in buff and blue dismount and come running in. At the sight of her companion, they gave a shout and advanced down the hill, stumbling and floundering in the deep snow.

"I yield you into the hands of your friends," said the Captain gravely but she could only wring her hands in an agony of terror and cry:

"Oh, run, run!"

He was hardly a dozen feet from her when two shots rang out in rapid succession and he stopped, staggered for a second and then stumbled on.

"It is nothing," he turned to call back to her with a reassuring smile, although his face was white with pain.

He set off again, but his pace grew ever slower and more faltering. Across the field sounded once more the high, loud neighing of his horse.

Clotilde, glancing in that direction, saw suddenly that two more men had been left at the edge of the lane and were now crouching behind a clump of bayberry bushes close to where the English officer must pass. As she watched one of them rose to his knees, levelled his musket and took deliberate aim.

"Stop," she cried out, turning to run toward them through the deep drifts. Although her feet would scarcely carry her, she managed somehow to make her way along until she caught up with the wavering scarlet figure that was struggling nearer and nearer to the hidden enemy.

"You shall not shoot!" she called out loudly as she grasped him by the dripping sleeve of his red coat. "You shall not touch him; he is my prisoner!"

And to this the young officer made no remonstrance, for he had fallen face downward in the snow.

CHAPTER XVIII

QUAKER LADIES

WHEN Stephen returned at mid-morning of that same day, his horses steaming in the cold air and his two serving-men trailing out behind him, unable to keep up with the furious pace their master had set, he found that, for the first time, there was no one at the door to greet him. He had spent the night at a small town twenty miles from Hopewell and, on hearing at dawn of the successful British expedition, he had pushed forward with all haste, quite ignorant still of the happenings at his own house. His eyes opened wide at the sight of blue-coated soldiers scattered about his grounds, but he did not stop to question them. He came into the hall and found no one there, he mounted the stairs and on the landing met Mother Jeanne, who greeted him with such a torrent of incoherent French that he had not the slightest idea of what she sought to tell him. After looking in at several of the open doors, his expression of wonder growing every moment, he finally encountered Doctor Thorndyke, just coming downstairs after a lengthy examination of the wounded officer.

"In Heaven's name," said Stephen to him, "will some one tell me what is amiss in this house? I come home to find my garden in the possession of soldiers, Mère Jeanne apparently quite out of her

senses, Clotilde asleep, a total stranger installed in my best bedroom and a scarlet coat, covered with blood, hanging over the back of a chair. Is all the world gone mad, or is it only I?"

The Doctor laughed.

"It is indeed somewhat disturbing," he said, "to come home to a peaceful house and find a wounded prisoner of war, a young heroine whose praises every one is singing and a frantic Frenchwoman whom excitement seems to have robbed of all her English. But come downstairs, Stephen, and I will give you the whole story as well as I have managed to learn it from a dozen different people who all sought to tell me at once. The one who knows the most is up yonder in your guest room and will be unable to state his version of the matter for some time to come."

In Stephen's study, where Mother Jeanne, who had at last collected her wits a little, brought them breakfast, the Doctor related the story of the escape of Andrew Shadwell and the night's adventures of Clotilde.

"She knew," commented Stephen, when he heard of her toiling so late in the empty cottage; "she knew well indeed that, had I been here, I would never have permitted such a thing. She was making the most of my absence, the minx!"

When he heard how the English soldiers had marched past Hopewell unheard and unseen in the storm, and had brought the troublesome Tories safely away, he chuckled aloud and slapped his knee.

"We are well rid of Andrew Shadwell, the slippery rogue," he said, "and this was, after all, the

best way out of the situation. I wish the English joy of him. But when I overtook the troops from Boston this morning, I found them a disappointed set who had just learned that they had arrived a few hours too late. Their leader had naught to do but to march his men back again with as good a grace as he could, for the ship that brought the English troops was already far out to sea."

When the Doctor reached that part of the tale dealing with the young Captain's return to see that Clotilde was safe, he warmed to his task of story-teller.

"It was the deed of a gallant fellow," he concluded, "and I would the boy were not so sorely hurt. I find I have a friendly feeling for him, not only on account of his courage but because of his resemblance to you. Even as he lies there, white and unconscious, he has a familiar look that strikes me as uncanny. Just go and see for yourself, if you do not believe me."

Stephen mounted the stairs once more and stepped into the room where the wounded soldier lay. Bidding the Doctor's servant, who watched beside the bed, to draw aside the curtain, he stood for some time gazing at the white face on the pillow. Then he turned, without a word, and went back to his waiting friend.

"I will show you why his face is so familiar," he said.

He led the physician into the dining-room and pointed to the portrait that hung in the place of honour above the sideboard. It was a picture of Amos Bardwell, painted in England and sent many

years ago to Alisoun Sheffield. As was the somewhat unnatural fashion of that day, the artist had pictured the young man on horseback, his painted steed prancing, his cloak flying out behind him and his plumed hat held aloft in his hand. Behind him was the usual background of woods and distant cliffs crowned by a castle. Face and figure were so much like the young officer's upstairs that it was small wonder that Clotilde, when she saw him gallop down the road that October morning, had felt so sure she had seen him before. As Stephen and the Doctor looked at the portrait, both were thinking that it might have been meant for the wounded stranger himself, save that the picture was fifty years old and the young soldier was surely not half that age.

"Amos Bardwell!" exclaimed the doctor. "How happily we used to play together when we two were little eager lads and he was a big, kindly one. Do you mind how he taught us the game of 'King William was King James' Son' and how you would never let us play it again after your friend the fat British Sergeant gave you the true history of King William and King James? Heard you ever what became of that doughty officer?"

"Sergeant Branderby?" said Stephen. "I fear that he perished the next year in the great Jacobite uprising, for I never heard news of him again. Do you remember his tales of the Low Countries to which we used to listen so breathlessly?"

The Doctor did not answer at once as he was still gazing at the picture.

"So this lad upstairs is Amos' son!" he observed at last.

"His grandson, more likely," Stephen answered, looking reflectively at the picture. "You forget, comrade, how time passes and that we were not boys yesterday. Amos' only child was a daughter, of whom we lost all trace after he died, nor ever knew even whom she married. When I was in England, I went down to the little place in the country that was his home when he was not at sea: I saw his grave in the churchyard, but of his daughter I could get no news. The village people said only that she never came back there after her father's death, but had, they thought, finally gone to dwell with some distant kindred in Scotland. One old woman had heard it rumoured that the girl had married one of these far-removed cousins, but she could not recollect the name."

As they turned way from the picture, the Doctor said in a tone of misgiving:

"That boy upstairs seems a sturdy fellow, but my heart fails me concerning him, none the less. It will take skilled and faithful nursing to bring back to health a lad with one bullet lodged in his ribs and another gone through his knee. My man is with him now, but even he is not so good an attendant as is needed, while that old Frenchwoman who cared so well for you, Stephen, is now too old and prone to the losing of her wits. Who is to be the boy's nurse I do not know."

"Here is his nurse," said a quiet voice in the doorway, and the two wheeled to see Clotilde standing there, gay and sweet as a flower after her long sleep and none the worse for her adventures.

"You? Why you are but a child!" exclaimed

the Doctor. "Only last week, it seems to me, I saw you, a little maid, standing in that doorway with your white-frilled apron and your braided hair and with a smoking blunderbuss held in your hand as daintily as though it were a rose."

Clotilde smiled, but soberly.

"That was more like seven years ago than seven days," she answered, "and I am surely now a woman grown although I have failed somehow to reach a woman's stature. I have wished often," she added with a sigh, for this was a sore subject with her, "that I could have grown tall and stately like all of those of Master Simon's kindred."

"Whatever her age and size, she has done a woman's work since the war began," said Stephen. "And as for your height, my child, sigh not over that as being unlike the others. Radpaths, Bardwells and Sheffields, we are all proud to call you one of us!"

At which speech, Clotilde first dropped him a stately curtsey and then ran across the room to throw her arms about his neck.

It was a long, long time, as the Doctor had feared, before the young English officer made even enough progress on the road toward health to warrant them in hoping that he could be brought the whole of that toilsome way. Many weeks it was before his fevered mind became wholly clear, or the Doctor would permit his being questioned as to who he was and whether there was really reason for his resemblance to the portrait in the dining room. Upon the first day that he sat up, however, he put all doubts to an end by giving a full account of himself. Not only

did he prove to be of Stephen's kindred and the grandson of Amos Bardwell, but his surname was the same as Master Simon's. His mother had married a distant kinsman of Master Simon's and the boy's name, therefore, was Radpath, Gerald Radpath.

"And I am as proud of my Puritan ancestor as any of you Americans can be," he said to Stephen and Clotilde as they sat beside his bed. "I have heard from my mother all the tales of that far journey among the Indians and how his daughter and my own grandfather, Amos Bardwell, dared to stand firm at the witch trial. But my knowledge of scenes and places was vague, having come through so many hands and I never dreamed, that night when I found Mademoiselle Clotilde that the place of our meeting was the shoemaker's cottage and that the snow-covered scene of my disaster was Master Simon's famous garden."

"But how could you," burst out Clotilde, "if you were of Master Simon's blood, draw your sword against the Colonies and maintain the unjust cause of the King?"

Stephen held up his hand in warning against the speaking of such vigorous reproaches to a man weak and ill and propped up among his pillows for the first time. But Gerald Radpath only smiled.

"You forget, Mademoiselle," he replied, "that we also were of *your* kin and that you drew your swords against us. Moreover, Master Simon was as loyal a subject of Queen Elizabeth and the first King James as am I, of King George. Did not his father, Robin Radpath, die in the effort to bear the

great Queen's message to the Emperor of Cathay? And I think you do not understand," he went on more earnestly, "that we who came over to America in the King's army had no very real knowledge of the cause in which we were fighting. Many such as I came up from the counties far from London, heard that beyond the seas was a company of ungrateful rebels who wished to make over our Parliament's laws to suit themselves, and so threw ourselves headlong into our country's service. We were amazed, later, to find that we were facing a spirited people who fought for a splendid cause, one that they, and even we ourselves in the end, knew was a just one. We had little taste for our task, most of us, before much time had passed; this I tell you freely since now I lie here wounded with no great chance of fighting again before the war is over. But I tell you also that, once having sworn allegiance to the King's service, we will not turn traitors and betray his side to the enemy. His officers will fight on until a chance comes to withdraw honourably — we are not turncoats like Andrew Shadwell."

"You are a good lad and a loyal soldier," said Stephen, holding out his hand to clasp his cousin's heartily. "A brave heart is a brave heart on whichever side it stands."

"Had you ever had to do with Andrew Shadwell before?" inquired Clotilde, for she noticed his tone of extreme bitterness when he spoke of their Tory neighbour.

"That night my companions surrendered to the Colonial soldiers, and I managed to escape," Gerald answered, "Andrew Shadwell hid me in his barn

from midnight until dawn. Then he came out to say that he had decided to swear allegiance to the American cause, since fortune seemed to be against the English, and so he turned me out into the growing daylight. Nor would he even give me information as to the road, lest it should be held against him that he had given aid to the enemy. Later, when the tide of success seemed to have set in our direction again, he changed his party once more and clamoured for rescue so loudly that the British Commander, in return for some information that he had given, was obliged to comply with his request. The traitorous fellow had the grace to stammer and turn red when he saw who it was that had been sent to save him. Had he remained, he would have been a loyal citizen of the United States again, by now, I do not doubt."

Andrew Shadwell, wherever he had taken refuge, must indeed have chided himself bitterly for fleeing to the English just when success seemed to have returned to the side of the Colonies. Victory was with the American arms all through the Spring, for the troops that had braved the horrors of the Valley Forge winter, found thereafter that the dangers of battle were small by comparison.

So, at least, did Miles Atherton explain the turn of fortune in the American favour. He had been sent by General Washington on some errand to Boston and had ridden down to Hopewell for a hasty visit to his family and to Stephen and Clotilde. It was a bright, sweet, warm June day that they sat together in the garden, when all the gayest birds were singing and all the softest breezes blowing — a day

to which Clotilde long looked back with wistful memory.

Stephen had been ill and seemed now quite well again: that was one reason why she was so happy. His malady was one which he himself pronounced of no importance but over which the Doctor looked grave.

"These flutterings of the heart," jested Stephen, "are less worthy of an old man than of a young maid. Were they Clotilde's —"

"It is no matter for joking," his old friend interrupted sternly. "Flutterings of the heart must be attended to or they will have grave effect."

"You cannot frighten an old man whose span is almost completed," returned Stephen. "Besides I will live to see the end of this long struggle; to do that I am determined."

So the Doctor had gone out muttering anxiously to himself, but Stephen had managed to quiet Clotilde's fears and to make her smile again.

Two other pleasant things had also happened on that same morning, previous to Miles' coming. One was Gerald Radpath's walking unaided for the first time. He had come out into the garden and had limped as far as the bench by the sundial, with such success that Clotilde had felt that they could believe at last that his recovery was not so hopelessly far away. Weak and pale as he still was, he seemed, for the first time as he sat there in the sunshine, to be somewhat more than the mere ghost of that sturdy soldier who had carried her across the snowy meadow. Another joy, one even more unexpected, was that the linden tree, after standing black and

bare for two Springs, this year put forth leaves and, on that very day, had come once more into bloom. Many times the question had been raised as to whether it ought not to be cut down, but each time Stephen had refused, saying that trees so injured had been known to stand seven years dead and then put forth life again. Now his patience had been rewarded, the happy bees hummed in the branches, the grass was green in the little Queen's garden and the hedges were growing tall again.

"It is surely a pleasant world," said Gerald, as he drank in long breaths of the fresh warm air and looked out at the dancing blue waters of the harbour.

It was at this moment that the gate slammed and Miles came hurrying up the path to greet Clotilde and Stephen. When he turned to Gerald, the faces of both were a study, since the one remembered keenly the moment when his foolhardiness had nearly caused his death as a spy, while the other had the unhappy knowledge that, surrounded though he was by comfort and kindness, he was now the prisoner who had then been the captor. The moment of confusion was not long, however, for Clotilde began telling pell-mell the reason of that resemblance that had puzzled them all. Having finished, she began to ply Miles with questions as to all that had befallen him during that season of suffering at Valley Forge. The thought of all that the patriots had undergone stirred Miles to what was, for him, an unusual flow of speech.

"The memory of that winter will last all of us to our dying day, and after," he said. "There were

bitter cruel winds that cut through our threadbare coats as though they had been made of gossamer, there were steep slippery paths where our benumbed feet stumbled and the ice tore our worn-out shoes and gashed us to the bone. Our little huts of logs and earth were more like the burrows of animals than the abiding places of humans."

"And all the time," said Clotilde, "the British army was so near by, and so warm and comfortable in Philadelphia."

"Yes," replied Miles, "we could climb to the hilltop and see the smoke of the city and know that it was there the English soldiers were spending the winter in pleasant ease. My heart used to fill with bitterness, at times, and I would wonder how it could be that all should be so fair for them while such hardship was meted out to us."

"Nevertheless," commented Stephen, "you had a great man to lead you through your time of suffering."

Miles' eyes shone at the recollection.

"We had indeed," he said, "and there were no such thoughts could assail me when I came near General Washington. I used to meet him sometimes walking the snowy path before his little, rough stone house, or I would see him through the window, writing letters in the cold bare room. I would see that his grey, drawn face was growing gaunter and older every day and my heart would burn in me to do my utmost for such a man. There was not one of his soldiers but loved him just as I did. Our shoes and clothes were worn and our strength was wasted but had he asked us to walk to Jericho and back for

his simple pleasure we would have done it joyfully. It is the love of the soldiers for General Washington that has fought this war, it is that spirit of his, sombre, slow, but never turning back, that will lead us to victory in the end. I would that my words were not so futile, that I could make you see what manner of man he is."

"You have not done so ill, boy, as it is," said Stephen, a little huskily, as he sat looking straight before him down to the sea. The tide was coming in along the sandy beach and past the rocky headlands. It must have been that he likened it in his mind to the rising tide of the cause of Liberty, coming so slowly but not to be stopped or stayed by the hand of any man. He must have wondered whether that cause would touch its high-water mark while he still lived.

"And when the Spring came, Miles, were you not happy then?" questioned Clotilde.

Miles' eyes danced, while his face and tone changed so completely that Stephen turned sharply to look at him in startled wonder.

"Ah, you never saw such a Spring as that which comes to Pennsylvania," he exclaimed, "not the headlong season we have here, when one week the meadows are white with snow and the next are as green as in midsummer, but a long, warm, slow-coming Spring when the little, brown, wooded hills turn green so gradually that you scarce can see the change from day to day, when the sunny banks are thicker with blue violets than with grass, and when a strange wild herb grows thick in the meadows and smells sharp and sweet when the grazing horses

trample it. Our Spring comes in a great breath-taking wave, but theirs like some rippling tide that breaks and rises a little and breaks again."

"It is so we have Spring in England," said Gerald. He, as well as Stephen seemed to have observed the change in Miles' manner, and was regarding him with keen curiosity. Clotilde alone seemed not to notice anything unusual, so absorbed was she in what he said.

"I can never forget," went on Miles, "a meadow all green and yellow with new grasses and a tiny stream flowing through the midst, its banks blue-grey with masses of flowers called Quaker Ladies. Such sweet, gay-hearted little blossoms, growing in thousands beside the marshy bank —"

He suddenly caught Stephen's eye fixed upon him and stopped in a scarlet agony of embarrassment. Getting up from his seat he announced hastily that he must go, that his time was short in Hopewell and there was much to do.

"Then come first to the house with me," said Stephen. "I have a letter for General Washington written some days since, and have been vainly seeking a messenger."

As they walked up the path together he once more regarded the boy oddly.

"It seems to me," he observed, "that I never before heard a bluff soldier talk so fondly of blossoms and meadows and — Quaker Ladies."

He was unkind enough to laugh aloud as Miles floundered vainly in his effort to explain.

"But you do not understand," the poor youth began vainly to protest in stammering explanation,

" that the Quaker Ladies are flowers — that grow beside brooks —"

" Ay, and there is another variety, that peeps through farm-house windows when brave soldier lads go riding by," Stephen suggested. " But never mind, boy," he added, his kind voice full of warm affection, " do not blush so. Know you not that no one wishes you greater happiness than do Clotilde and I ? "

" Thank you — ah, thank you, Master Sheffield," Miles managed to get out, and with that seized the letter and made his escape.

It was not strange that Clotilde looked back upon this day as one of especial happiness. They had been so gay there in the garden, all four of them together, so little realising the changes that were to come so soon. Gerald's returning health made him talk more and more of imposing on their hospitality no longer: a month later his exchange was effected and he made ready for departure. It was arranged that he should go back to England since he had neither the power nor, if the truth were told, the heart for further fighting. David Thurston came home on leave at just that time and it was arranged that Captain Radpath was to ride back with him as far as New York where he could take ship for home.

Stephen had whispered to Clotilde some of his suspicions as to the state of Miles' heart and together they made very merry over the secret. When a letter came from him, sent by the hand of David, she ran with it into the garden eager to see if it contained any further hints of that suspected affair of

the Quaker Lady. She was smiling as she opened the letter, smiling for the first time in many days.

Gerald Radpath was to leave in less than a week's time. Strange to say, he too had seemed very sombre these last few days, very quiet and thoughtful and much unlike his former cheery self. Many times Stephen had caught him watching with wistful eyes as Clotilde went to and fro about the house or garden.

"Well, is it small wonder?" Stephen had said with a sigh to Mother Jeanne, whose sharp black eyes, you may be sure, had noticed the same thing. "He dared much for her and she has been a faithful nurse to him. I think that great happiness is to come out of that adventure in Skerry's cottage."

But, apparently, Stephen for once was wrong. He could not know that, on the morning that Miles' letter came, Gerald had been walking long in the garden and had finally come hurrying up the path, his face bright with happy resolve. He had paused when he came upon Clotilde, seated under the linden tree, just unfolding the paper in her hands.

"A letter?" he said inquiringly.

"Yes, from Miles," she returned with a bright smile, and, not realising that he had stopped beside her instead of going on, she began to read.

Gerald watched her as her eyes ran with eager interest from line to line, thought he could guess the reason of her being so absorbed and, with all the new happiness gone from his face, he turned away.

When, a few days later, he said good-bye to her before the door of the great house, he tried to mut-

ter some words about "thanks for her great kindness" and "sincere hopes for her welfare always," but both he and she fell into desperate confusion and, in the end, he strode away down the steps, his farewells only half said. Clotilde watched him mount his grey horse and ride away down the driveway. She saw him disappear beyond the turn and felt, all of a sudden, very little and lonely in the midst of a very big, dreary, empty world.

It seemed to her, poor child, that for an absolutely unlimited time thereafter she had spent all her days in the dullest and weariest of tasks, of which the most unwelcome was the tending of cabbages. She grew to hate the great, coarse, clumsy vegetables that filled Master Simon's garden and that must continue to grow there, for the feeding of the poor, as long as the war should last. And the war dragged on endlessly, winter, summer, winter again and another summer: would it never cease? Stephen grew frailer and his face was often sharp with suffering, but still he jested over all his ills. He would not even allow Clotilde to complain that it was unjust that he should undergo so much.

"Every one suffers in war time," he would say. "We can expect nothing else."

"And will the war never end?" she exclaimed one day.

"Ay, some day, my dear," he answered, so gently that she was ashamed of her vehemence. "Remember that Jacob served for Rachel seven years; would you have us, who are serving for Liberty, stop at only five?"

"If seven years were all," she could not help replying, "but it looks now as though it were to be seven hundred."

There came at last a bright autumn morning that she was never to forget. The brisk spiciness in the air made the sun seem pleasant, so that Stephen, who had been ailing a little more than usual, had had his chair moved to the window that he might bask in the grateful warmth. Clotilde had made him comfortable with cushions and had gone to attend to her other duties about the house. She was standing at the china-cupboard in the dining-room when she heard the sound of horse's feet on the drive, heard the rattle of the knocker and old Jason's shuffling steps as he went to open the door. There was a pause, then Stephen's voice called to her from the next room.

"Clotilde, my child," he said, "a despatch from General Washington, and such joyful news. Come quickly and read it. But wait, first attend to the messenger, I have never seen a man so spent."

"Yes, Master Sheffield, I will come to you in a moment," she answered.

Jason was conducting the man to the kitchen and she followed to see that he had what he needed. He did indeed seem to have ridden so hard as to be utterly worn out; he sat in the chimney corner scarcely able to speak, so she spent some time in brewing a drink that would help to revive his strength. It must have been nearly twenty minutes later that she went into the study.

Stephen was leaning back in his big chair, the letter still lying on his knee. He had dropped asleep

there in the peaceful sunshine and seemed to be dreaming of happy things, so contented was his smile. She took the paper and read, only a few short words, but joyful news indeed.

"On October nineteenth, Lord Cornwallis surrendered his entire force to the allied French and American armies. I think we may say, dear friend, and thank God in so saying, that this means the end of the war."

The end of the war! What might that not mean to all of them? She had a sudden, joyful thought that it might bring the return of — of some one, then her conscience smote her that her first thought had been for herself. How happy Stephen looked, how he was resting after all this heavy labour and weary waiting!

She sat down beside him to wait patiently until he should awake and they could enjoy the great news together. For some time she sat there, very quietly, watching the slow sunshine creep up along his hand and arm and finally touch his smiling face and his white hair. How young he still looked, somehow, and how boyish in spite of all the years.

She waited happily, she could not tell how long. It was not until Mère Jeanne came in, not until she saw the old Frenchwoman's face suddenly grow white and heard her cry —

"Ah, the good angels protect us now!" that she realised that the peaceful sleep into which Stephen had fallen was of the sort that lasts forever.

CHAPTER XIX

GOODY PARSONS' ROSE

"TO my dear foster-child, called Clotilde Lamotte, but who, if she carries out my wish, will call herself Clotilde Sheffield until she changes that name for another, I leave all my possessions in and near the town of Hopewell and in her especial charge I place that plot of ground that has long been called Master Simon's garden. I leave behind me no directions as to how she is to care for that garden, since I know that she will tend and cherish it as lovingly as would I myself. I give her with it my blessing and I bid her be of good heart and not disappoint Master Simon."

It was this portion of Stephen's will, read to her by the staid old lawyer, that made Clotilde smile, even through her tears. "Not to disappoint Master Simon" had been a byword between herself and her dear Master Sheffield whenever the world looked dark and it seemed hard to face the future with courage. So, with as brave a spirit as she could muster, she set out to fulfil his wishes.

There was still much, so very much hard work for her to do. Although the surrender at Yorktown had marked the practical end of the fighting, the negotiations for peace had dragged on, the country could not settle down and want and poverty must

still be bravely faced. The little town of Hopewell, while it looked more cheerful and began to wear an air of greater prosperity, was still full of women who had lost the mainstay of their families, of men whose means of livelihood had been swept away, of others wounded or suffering who needed a hand to set them on their feet again. From cottage to cottage Clotilde went, giving freely of her help in advice, money and the products of her lands. The time had not yet come for the finishing of Stephen's house or the replanting of Master Simon's garden.

At length the peace-treaty was signed and ratified by Congress, the last winter of dire poverty went by and with the Spring the Colonies of America began the task of setting their affairs to rights and forming a new government. Many jealous eyes were watching them from across the seas, for all the world was saying that, though Americans might know how to fight for freedom they had no wisdom in the matter of keeping it. Their good friend France had helped them to win their battles, but she had no power to aid them now. Ah, how sorely was Stephen Sheffield missed at this crisis and how much he could have done to smooth the rough road of the blundering nation. Not only those nearest to him, but also many of the great men of the country mourned the fact that Stephen Sheffield's calm, clear, tolerant mind could not assist in this great task.

Miles Atherton did not come back to Hopewell until the last company of soldiers had disbanded and until General Washington had gone back to

Mount Vernon to become a plain country gentleman again, instead of the greatest man of his time. Then it was that Clotilde's old play-fellow came back to sit with her in the garden once more, to tell her that he was to make one more journey, to explain hesitatingly that this was to be a momentous one indeed — in short to unfold the whole story of the Quaker Ladies.

"All through that terrible winter at Valley Forge," he said as, little by little, she drew the tale from him, "the soldiers used to talk of some one whom they called the 'little Quaker Lady.' No one had ever seen her close, for she used to come like a little grey shadow, slipping past our outer lines and then running away into the dark again as though she were a ghost. But what she left behind was apt to be far from ghost-like, such baskets of wonderful good things, such fat capons, such eggs and butter and fresh cream cheese! You would have to be a half-starved soldier to realise what her gifts meant."

"Well," smiled Clotilde encouragingly, as Miles paused, "surely all your raptures are not merely concerning what she brought you to eat."

"No," he answered. "I was only thinking of how I began to tell you of this when I was here before, and of how my unwonted talkativeness betrayed me to Master Sheffield and how he laughed at me. I am glad now that he did guess my secret and that I have the memory of the good wishes that he gave me. No," he went on, returning to his tale, "if it had not been for a chance happening, I would have had no raptures nor ever known more

of the Quaker Lady than that her hens laid most wondrous fresh eggs."

"Most eggs are fresh when laid," Clotilde reminded him, but he assured her that none could ever be compared to those roasted over the coals of a campfire in the wind-sheltered hollows of Valley Forge.

"I was doing sentry duty one night," he continued, "for officers took their turn as well as privates, so short-handed were we. I had built a little fire, just so that my comrades would not have the sorrow of finding a frozen man at my post when they came to relieve me. Suddenly I thought that I heard, above the crackling of the flames, a sound of footsteps on the frozen snow, and to make sure, I dropped a branch of fat pitch-pine upon the coals. There was a quick flare of light and I could make out, not ten paces from me, a little dark figure in a Quaker bonnet and cloak. For a single second I saw her face plainly before the flame died down. She cried out when she found that she had been discovered, dropped her burden and fled away into the shadows. How the men chided me when I carried the basket into camp and told my story; they feared that she had been too badly frightened to return and besides four of the precious eggs were broken."

"But she did come back?" Clotilde said eagerly.

"Yes, but so shyly and secretly that I did not see her again all through the winter. I watched eagerly enough, of that you may be sure, but it was not until Spring that I met her again. I had wandered one day far from our valley, farther indeed than was

thought safe, but so frantic was I to see something green after all those months in the barren camp, that I had no thought of where I went. I told you once of the meadow and the little clear stream with its banks blue-grey with the close-growing Quaker Ladies; I did not tell you that, as I was hidden for a moment behind a clump of willows, the little Quaker maid herself, in her blue-grey gown and with her hands full of flowers, came walking along the farther bank. When she saw me she would have run away again, but I — I persuaded her to remain."

Clotilde laughed quietly. It was hard to picture slow-spoken Miles standing on the bank of the stream, trying to beguile the shy Quaker maiden on the other side into waiting to talk to him. But into the life of even the most silent of youths there comes always an instant of eloquence, and this, it seemed, was Miles' great moment. He sat shaking his head over the wonder and glory of it even now.

"And did General Washington have to send a squad of soldiers to bring you home again?" she asked him at last.

"Not quite," replied Miles, blushing but laughing at himself at the same time, "although I admit that there was almost necessity for it. I came to the meadow again and yet again, where she would come to meet me. I began to feel — oh, Clotilde, how it does steal upon you unawares!"

Poor Clotilde felt a sudden fierce stab at her heart. How it did, to be sure, come unawares and never go away again!

"At last our army marched forth from Valley Forge," he went on, "and she, just as Master Shef-

field guessed, was peeping through the window to see us go by. Her father was a prosperous farmer, not averse to our side of the war, but more willing to sell his produce for the English gold than for the worthless paper money that bought our supplies. Had he ever known how many of his good things went into the larder of the American soldiers, I fear it would have gone hard with his daughter."

"It must have been difficult to see her after that," Clotilde observed.

"Most surely it was," he said with a sigh; "there were but brief visits snatched as our army went back and forth. I was nearly captured more than once, but several times brought back information that was of use to our Commander, so I never received the reprimands that I well deserved. There would have been no Captain Radpath to set me free this time had the enemy laid hands upon me. By the way, have you heard aught of him since he sailed for England?"

"No, nothing," she answered hastily, and turned the subject quickly. "And so now the war is over, you are going to be wedded? Oh, Miles, I am so glad!"

"In two short months," he told her joyfully, "and there will be the end of midnight rides and secret meetings in the meadow. Then she will be here always and nothing to come between us. Oh, if you could but know how happy I am!"

She could well measure his happiness, she thought, by her own great loneliness, but of that she could not speak. She was too fond of her old playmate not to feel a glow of pleasure in his joy, and she

made him happier yet by the earnestness of her good wishes. He went away through the gate at last, his joyfulness running over for all the world to see, as he beamed delightedly upon every one he passed.

In spite of her good share in Miles' happiness, the world seemed now very empty and forlorn to Clotilde, for Mère Jeanne had slipped away during the dark, stormy days of the winter and had left her adopted child to face life all alone. Only Stephen's last request, "not to disappoint Master Simon" availed to keep up her failing courage. She had a new task before her this Spring, one to which she could turn unhindered at last, since starvation no longer threatened the poor of Hopewell. And so, with a heavy heart, she bent her energies to the replanting of Master Simon's garden.

"But it will not be his garden now," she reflected drearily. "It will be a place like any other, since I who plant it am not even one of his own children. All that belonged to him has perished utterly."

When the place was ready, however, when the old beds had been dug and the former lawns sown with grass again, she bethought her of at least one flower that she could plant and know it was still Master Simon's. Up on the forest hillside was that wonderful group of daffodils, set out by his hand and waiting all these years to return to the garden whence they came. With old Jason beside her, she toiled through the muddy lanes and up through the wood, where buds were bursting on the trees and Mayflowers were opening under the dry leaves. There she found what she sought, the dear yellow flowers, flinging their gold down the slope like long

drifts of Spring sunshine. Two great basketfuls they brought home, and set the sturdy plants in a long row by the fence where daffodils had always grown since the first year that the Colony was settled.

And then there began a miracle, so it seemed, a wonder wrought only by simple love and friendliness, but a miracle just the same. She was lingering over the task of putting the last clump of daffodils in place when through the gate came young Giles Thurston, twelve-year-old brother to the good soldier David. To his house more than to any other she had gone, during the years of want, and had given help when otherwise starvation would have come very close.

"Please, Mistress," said Giles, laying upon the ground a great awkward bundle that he had been carrying in both arms, "I heard that you were planting your garden and I have been wishing so much that I might bring you something to grow there. Our own garden is bare and planted with turnips and cabbages of which you surely have enough already, but up on the hill is a tumble-down empty cottage with a rose vine growing all over its broken walls. My mother says that an old woman named Goody Parsons used to dwell there a long, long time ago and that the rose once grew in Master Simon's garden. See, I have brought you a root of it. Mother put a slip into the ground the very first Spring after your garden was burned. And here, too, is a part of Goody Parsons' hawthorn bush that I think must also have come from Master Simon."

Poor old Goody Parsons, dead so many years and gone to that Heaven that was to be like Hertfordshire, how she would have rejoiced to know that her memory still lived and had offered back the gift that Master Simon had given.

Most joyfully did Clotilde accept what the boy had brought and together they went quickly to find the very place where the former plants had grown. They set the rose below the casement window of the drawing-room and the hawthorn bush close to the edge of the Queen's garden.

"Now," exclaimed Clotilde, "though all the rest be only mine, I can feel that part of the garden at least still belongs to those who planted it."

Giles Thurston was not the only one, however, who had an offering to bring. Nearly every day some woman would present her with a bag of seeds, saying:

"These are of the pink and white hollyhocks that have flourished in our dooryard ever since Mistress Margeret Bardwell gave my grandmother the first plants."

Or a man would stop at the gate to say:

"I have carried hither a clump of sweet-william that perhaps you may like to have. It is a matter of pride with us that Master Simon himself gave the first plants to one of our family. They say he brought them from England."

So it went on, Stephen's flowers, Alisoun's, Margeret's and Master Simon's all were to be found growing somewhere, so many had been the gifts and so grateful the friends who had received them.

Fraxinella, wallflowers, peonies and fair maids of France, all were there to grow anew in memory of the brave old Puritan and his children. Clotilde dropped a few tears as she set out the fair maids of France. What a long, long time it was since Stephen had found her sitting beside the bed to sing to them, how swift the years had been and how happy until so little a time ago!

The most wonderful gift of all came at the very end of the replanting. It was brought by the minister of Hopewell, who since the very beginning of the war had been away and had only just now come home again. What he gave her was a little bag of gold and an old, torn yellow letter.

"These were left in my hands," he explained to Clotilde, "by the pastor before me, who had received them in turn from the man who came before him. It was only as I was on my way home that I heard full news of the burning of the garden and realised that the assistant that I had left here did not know that the letter had to do with just such a disaster. Indeed, so old is the trust that I had well-nigh forgotten it myself."

Clotilde, standing by the open window in Stephen's study, slowly opened the worn, yellow missive. It bore the crabbed signature of Samuel Skerry and contained these words:

"If ever Simon Radpath's garden be destroyed, I know now that it will not be God's judgment, as Jeremiah Macrae has sought to make us think, but that it will be the work of evil alone. Therefore, in the hands of the minister of Hopewell I am leav-

ing this money, the half of all I have, so that if that living memorial to Master Simon should come to harm, this will help to build it up again.

"I might have known that I could not hate him forever, might have realised, when in a fit of jealous rage I sought to destroy his garden that it was of no use. A garden such as his, that is planted in the hearts of his fellow men, can never perish. As I have sat at my cobbler's bench through all these years, toiling for my living in an alien land, I have fought against the thought of Master Simon and of all the good he did to me and to others, but I have fought in vain. The memory grew and grew within my heart, choking out my evil and bitter thoughts, just as his clumps of blossoming plants used to grow until there was no room left for weeds. So I have come back to do what justice I can at last ere I die, and to struggle through the snow to look at his gravestone where he sleeps up yonder on the hillside. I would that I had earned, like him, such peaceful, true repose."

The tears rained down Clotilde's cheeks as she refolded the letter. So that was why Samuel Skerry, old and broken as he was, had travelled all the way from Holland to New England, spurred by his longing to make amends for the wrong that he had done.

The minister emptied the contents of the bag upon the table.

"It is not a very great sum," he said, "but the little shoemaker's penitence should make it equal to all the riches in the world."

"It will buy back the land that, in the necessity of war, had to be sold," answered Clotilde, "the land that Master Sheffield valued at just that sum — all the riches in the world."

Thus it came about that the strip of meadow land running down to the sea became once more a part of the garden, and its blossoming hedge that had escaped the fire, bloomed, that Spring, for Clotilde and for Hopewell and not for tight-pocketed Ephraim Paddock.

By this time every flower bed and border was filled again, the May sunshine had brought out the apple blossoms and the linden leaves, had quickened the growing hedges and made green the grass of the Queen's garden.

"Another year," reflected Clotilde, rising from her task of setting out the last plant, "and the place will be all itself again."

She was working near the hedge that separated that part of the garden from the lane, and as she stood there, surveying her handiwork, she heard two men talking together as they passed on the other side of the bushes.

"They say there is a ship from England come to anchor in Salem harbour," said one. "John Ashby rode up to see her, as she is partly his, the *Star of Hope*. She was caught in an English port when war began and has been held back by the winter storms ever since the peace was declared. She is the first vessel to come to these parts from England since the war ended."

"Ay," said the other. "John Ashby must be a

glad man. It is a happy sign for all of us when ships ply the seas again between the Old Country and the New. I wonder what she carries!"

He could not have wondered so much as did the little maiden who stood on the other side of the hedge, her heart beating as though it would choke her. A ship — from England! No, no, he would not come, she must not let herself believe it. Through all the long morning she forced herself to go on with her work, and very badly indeed was it done, for her thoughts were upon one subject to the exclusion of all else.

The shadow of the sundial had dwindled almost to the marking of noon, when she heard feet in the lane again, the running feet of men and boys, hurrying past and up the hill.

"There are travellers from Salem riding into the inn yard," she heard some one call. "Come quick to hear the news of the *Star of Hope*. John Ashby is with them; he says that some men have come all the way from London on her. She is the first ship from England."

Housewives coming to their open doors re-echoed the cry.

"The first ship from England!" they called to one another. "Now indeed will more prosperous times begin again!"

Sternly Clotilde took her way to the farthest corner of the garden, where a tangle of wild blackberry and sweetbriar had grown up, and where once had stood King James' Tree.

"I can transplant the sweetbriar," she was telling herself. "It used to grow outside the window

where Gerald — what am I saying, where Master Sheffield loved to sit. I believe —"

Oh, what was that sound — horse's hoofs coming down the lane, a pause for dismounting, a creak of the gate! Whose were those feet on the path behind her coming so quickly? She dared not look round, she could not. She felt suddenly weak and giddy; the trembling of her knees forced her to catch at a branch for support.

"Little Mademoiselle," said a voice behind her. "What is the matter? Do you know me only in a scarlet coat?"

What happened then all Hopewell might have watched unforbidden, had not all, most fortunately, been occupied with other matters.

"For shame," said Clotilde, finally freeing herself and realising, of a sudden, where they were. "How can you do so, here by the highroad, where every person in the town can see?"

"I care not who sees," responded Gerald cheerfully, "but if it will save your blushes, we will go into the Queen's Garden."

So there under the linden tree, Clotilde listened to just such words as Alisoun Bardwell had heard there also, the same that Margeret Radpath had hearkened to in the schoolhouse lane, words that had opened the gates to such far-reaching happiness. The thin shadow of the sundial passed the noon mark, stretched its dark finger across one figure and then another on the circle of the dial. Still they sat there, while Clotilde learned how Gerald had gone away in silence on account of that unlucky letter from Miles, of his restless unhappiness in Eng-

land and his inability to bide at home when he heard of an American ship setting sail for a port so near to Hopewell. Of how Miles had met him at the gate of the inn and, so full of joy that he could not keep his news to himself, had told of his approaching marriage. Whatever Gerald might have already planned to do or say, if indeed he had plans at all, had at once been swept away in his instant desire to reach Clotilde with all the speed he might.

"I wish that dear Master Sheffield might have known of our happiness," said Clotilde as he concluded his story, "or might at least have seen that it was to come."

"Perhaps he did," returned Gerald, "for when I went away he gave me Samuel Skerry's lucky penny and said, 'It will be the best good fortune of all, lad, when it brings you back to us.' So here it is and here am I, and it is on this side of the water that I am going to abide for the rest of my life. The war is over, King George's quarrel with the Colonies is settled forever and I can, with all honesty, throw in my lot with the Americans."

Clotilde had much to tell also, of Stephen's death and Mère Jeanne's, of the unhappy, dragging years of the war, of the final beginning of peace and prosperity, and of the replanting of the garden.

"And see," she cried joyously, pointing to the beds already green with growing plants and to the rows of blossoms that had come out in all their Spring bravery of colour just as though they knew the soil had once been their real home, "is it not a marvel that Master Simon's garden has so come to its own again?"

"It is indeed," replied Gerald soberly, "and it stands only for the greater miracle that you have wrought, you Americans. Wonderful things beyond the mere planting of flowers have been done by those who dwelt here. Of all the tales told me by my own grandfather and by Master Sheffield I like best the story of how Master Simon saved the French priest at such great risk to himself, yet would not flee from peril because, as he said, 'I have planted a garden here in the wilderness and I must abide to see what sort of fruit it bears.' Ah, such a garden as he planted in this new world, he and his kind, sowing the seeds of liberty and justice and freedom for all! Their children and their children's children have tended what he planted, Master Sheffield and his good comrades have carried the seed far, and here is the fruit at last, a new country for a free people. I wonder at you all, little Clotilde, at you and at the line of my forbears. Why did all that work so prosper, both here in your garden and in the world without?"

"Master Simon knew why," answered Clotilde simply.

She led him down to the sundial and lifted the trailing vines that grew so close about the pedestal. There she showed him the words that Master Simon's hand had carved about the edge of the circle, cut so deep and so long ago, for posterity to read at last:

"I have planted, you have watered, but God gave the increase."

CHAPTER XX

THE SEA-ROAD TO CATHAY

IT is not always the end of a tale when the two most familiar figures in it come to their wedding day; the business of living happily ever after is a more complicated matter than that. The work that those two are to do together must be safely launched before we can turn aside from them, knowing, more or less, how the rest of their story is to be told. Clotilde and Gerald Radpath had chosen to go their way together, but, even for some time after they were married, they stood hesitating a little, not quite sure as to which way the appointed road was to lead.

As many people said at first, it was a pleasant thing that the name of Radpath had come back to the great house on the hill. It was like to stay there also, through another generation at least, they would add, since, a year and a half later, there was a new member of the household, a sunny-hearted, sturdy young gentleman who romped and rolled upon the grass in the garden. It was a delight, besides, to see the big house finished at last, to see smooth panelling replace the rough boards, and plaster walls stand where bare timbers had been left. For the proper completing of Stephen Sheffield's house, Gerald had used a large part of the little fortune he

had brought with him from England, realised from the sale of his small estate. There were also outlying lands to be looked to, where the fields must be turned once more into their old round of cultivation. Stephen Sheffield's fortune, much confused and diminished on account of the war and of his great generosity, must be finally set in order, a task that was no small or easy one. In such occupations two years had passed away and still the great question as to just which highroad of life they were to take had not yet been settled.

They were walking in the garden one warm bright afternoon, Gerald carrying his little son, whose name as any one might guess, was Stephen. Clotilde, with her basket and garden shears, was gathering the last of the October-blooming flowers. Their talk had been of many and quite unimportant things, but for a little while they had been silent as they went, all three together, down the grassy path.

"Gerald," said Clotilde at last, "there has been for days something hanging heavy on your mind. Are you not nearly ready to tell me of it?"

Smiling at the ease with which she read his thoughts, Gerald answered:

"I am ready to speak of it now and was that moment searching for the words with which to begin. It is not an easy thing to say."

They sat down together on the bench and Gerald set young Stephen on the grass where he could roll and tumble to his heart's content.

"If you know my thoughts so well, Clotilde," he said, "you must have long seen that there is something wrong with my position here in Hopewell."

"I have known that something troubled you," she replied, "but I had not realised that there was aught amiss in regard to our neighbours."

Yet, even as she spoke, she remembered with dismay the odd, aloof manners of many of the townspeople toward Gerald. She recollected the distant courtesy toward both of them, of good souls who had always before received her with such simple friendliness. The people of Hopewell were old-fashioned in their ways, they clung to many a forgotten custom and form of speech unused by the rest of the world, and with this had kept the open-hearted frankness of an earlier and simpler life. Try as they might, thoughts could not be hidden and feelings concealed. And, as she thought the matter over, it seemed plainer and plainer to Clotilde as it had long been clear to Gerald, that their neighbours looked at him askance and did not seem to trust him.

"It is this," Gerald went on to explain, "a thing that at first I did not see myself. The people of this town like me not and wish that I were away. When we meet their eyes seem to say to me, 'Gerald Radpath, you bear Master Simon's name but are you of his kind? You, who fought against us in the war and have come back now that all the struggle is over, is your purpose good or bad?'"

"Yes," assented Clotilde, with no attempt at argument. "Yes, I have seen that too. But I had thought that time would sweep it all away when they have learned to know you better."

"The feelings of your hard-headed Puritan folk alter not so easily with time," he returned. "No,

I must show them that I care for the welfare of this country as much as they, and I have thought of a possible way. You know that Roger Bardwell said that the wealth of New England was to come from her traffic with the world rather than from her farms, you know that he proved his words and established a prosperous trade with England, France and Spain. Now all of that has been swept away by these years of war and it will take long labour to build it up again. But in that upbuilding I mean to have a share."

Clotilde did not speak quite yet; she knew that there was more to come.

"I can buy and refit one of the privateer vessels that have survived the war," he went on. "The *Mistress Margeret* is lying in the harbour now and can easily be made ready for a journey overseas with what money I have left to spend on ship and cargo. And in her I will make the first long voyage myself. My father was a ship's captain, I sailed with him when I was a lad and he taught me much, so that I might command a ship of my own some day."

He did not say what pain it would be to leave her for so long, she did not whisper of how her heart stood still at the thought of his going. Each one realised what the other felt, yet each knew that this was the only way and that here was Gerald's task in life.

"Where will you go?" she asked at last, and waited breathless for the reply that did not come at once.

"The sailors," he said, "have a name for the path that they steer, marked out by the sun and stars

across the trackless sea. They call it the sea road and to them, in time, it becomes as familiar as the housewife's way to market. And I am of a mind, Clotilde, to break out a new sea road, and a far one, a way that our sailors have never gone before."

"To Italy?" she asked, her eyes wide with anxiety.

He shook his head.

"To Africa?" No again.

"To — to —"

"To China," he said at last.

He sat with his hands clasped between his knees and his eyes fixed upon the grass at his feet as though he could not bear to look at the terror and distress in her face.

"Do you not see that I must go?" he pleaded. But still she did not answer.

To China! To that vague unknown land that the old story books and maps called Cathay. Had he said to the moon, it could not have seemed a more dangerous and impossible journey. It was almost exactly two hundred years since Gerald's ancestor, Robin Radpath, had set sail with Queen Elizabeth's message to the Chinese Emperor and had never come back. Since that time the land had grown to be only a little less strange; few were the travellers whose tales of adventures there had ever reached America. No ship from New England had gone so far; one or two, indeed, had attempted the voyage and had never been heard of again.

Many were the kinds of goods, spices and ivory, coffee, tea and silk that came from that inacessible country and from the equally mysterious East In-

dies, but they came by way of Constantinople, Venice or Portugal, and were transferred to English or American vessels. But to go direct, to have the little, newly-independent country of America hold out a hand to grasp at the trade that had never been attempted save by lands whose commerce was hundreds of years old! What a great idea it was, she thought, and in spite of herself thrilled with pride. How would the people of Hopewell regard Gerald then — after he had undertaken such a venture and carried it to a successful end.

"Yes," she said finally and with no remonstrance, "yes, I do see it. I know that you must go."

The *Mistress Margeret* was refitted from stem to stern that winter and the cargo in bales and boxes laid away within her hold. When the early Spring came, she lifted anchor, hoisted sail and swept out of Hopewell harbour, her prow turned to the far horizon and the other side of the world. She sailed short handed, for, bold as were the sailors of Hopewell, many of them hung back from such a venture. There were vague but terrible tales of what might happen to ships beyond the Cape of Good Hope, tales of furious hurricanes, of reefs and shoals in vast uncharted seas, and even of sea monsters.

"Let one ship go there and come back safe," they said. "Let us hear that only ordinary storms and ordinary dangers will assail us on such a voyage and that by the Southern stars we can steer as straight a course as by our good Dipper and North Star. Then we will set sail with a right good will!"

So the voyage began with only a few bold-hearted

seamen on board and with Gerald Radpath standing at the ship's stern, watching, as far as he could see, the brave little figure on the hillside that waved good-bye as long as loving eyes could span that ever widening distance.

"We will not make his going hard, Stephen, by showing him our tears," said Clotilde, at last, as she took up her boy in her arms and made her way with slow, dragging steps back to the house.

Would she ever, she wondered, stand there to watch come in the ship that now seemed sailing away for all time?

Almost from the moment that the *Mistress Margeret* sank below the horizon, Clotilde could see that the feeling toward Gerald was beginning to change.

"Your good husband, madam, Heaven send that he come back safe!" were words that she used to hear often as she went about the town.

"My grandfather began his fortunes as cabin boy to good Master Roger Bardwell," said one of the housewives to her, "and I hope my son will sail some day with Master Radpath."

And one old sailor, who had begged hard to go with Gerald but had been reluctantly left behind on account of his age and feebleness, said the best thing of all.

"I told 'em, mistress, many a time, that the lad had Simon Radpath's blood in him and a good spirit of his own besides, and I said he would show it yet. Now the blind ones are beginning to see."

There was but a single person who did not seem to have a higher regard for Gerald now that he was gone. This was Agnes Twitchell, whose bride-

groom husband had shipped as mate on the *Mistress Margeret.*

"We were but three months married," she cried to Clotilde, who had come to see her, but who was not allowed to enter her cottage door. "Your husband took my man from me and they will never come back. You were a wicked woman to let him do so; why did you not keep him safe at home?"

"Were you able to keep your husband when he thought that he must go?" Clotilde asked, and Agnes shook her head. "Then why think you that I could keep mine either, or that I was less unhappy than you at the thought of his going? Try to have courage and think of the day when they come back."

"That will never be!" sobbed the other, and she ran inside, slamming the door when her visitor would have followed to comfort her.

The days passed so slowly that it did, indeed, seem at times as though the period of waiting would never have an end.

"Nine — ten — eleven months we may be gone," Gerald had said, "and should the time lengthen to a year you are not to be afraid."

But the year passed, Spring came again and filled Master Simon's garden with flowers, yet its winds blew no great merchant ship into the harbour. The roses bloomed and died, the midsummer crickets and katydids sang in the long grass, the autumn flowers opened and the maples and birches in the forest began to show their scarlet and yellow.

"He *will* come, he *will* come!" Clotilde would cry fiercely to herself every day, but it had reached a point when she alone in all of Hopewell believed

it. A foreign sailor coming in on an English vessel brought a tale of how, off the coast of Africa, a ship answering all descriptions of the *Mistress Margeret* had been seen, drifting idly with all sail set and apparently no one on board.

"Just a moment we saw her in the fog," he said, "for the mist lifted and there she was like a picture, every sail hoisted and never a living soul in sight upon her decks. I doubt not she has gone to the bottom long before now."

Yet still Clotilde went on hoping. Agnes Twitchell wore black and openly mourned her husband as dead. She screamed after Clotilde upon the street one day and, when people sought to hush her, only cried out the louder.

"Her husband murdered my good man," she shrieked, frantic in her grief. "Shall I not then cry out to reproach her?"

Probably the most cruel blow, however, was the one that Clotilde received one summer evening as she was working among the flowers with Stephen at her side. Two people, talking together, passed the gate.

"That is Master Simon's garden," said one to the other, who must have been a stranger, and then the speaker added, not realising that Clotilde was close enough to hear:

"It is there that the Widow Radpath dwells with her son."

So that was what they called her now! Clotilde's hand closed over the branch of the rose vine that she was holding until the thorns tore her fingers, but she never noticed.

"Mother, what is a widow?" asked Stephen, but he never learned, for she snatched him up in her arms and burst into a passion of tears.

Every day, as the weather grew colder and autumn gales swept through the dead garden, she and Stephen spent long hours at the little round window of the stair-landing, looking and looking out to sea.

"Why are you not watching, Mother?" Stephen would exclaim at times. "Your eyes are shut!"

"I was praying," Clotilde would explain, "and that is better than watching, little son."

She had gone to sleep one windy night, listening to the heavy shutters rattling and to the threshing of the branches in the great trees outside, and had dreamed, as she always did in a storm, of high roaring waves and a good ship pounding upon cruel rocks. She awoke suddenly with the thunder of it still in her ears. But no, that noise was real, it was some one beating upon the great front door, striking frantic blows on the knocker in an effort to rouse the house.

Hastily slipping on some clothes and lighting a candle which guttered and flickered as she passed down the stairs, she hurried to the door, unbarred it, and flung it open. A gust of wind and rain rushed in, extinguished the candle and fairly blew a wild dishevelled figure into her arms. By the light from the dying coals that still glowed in the big hall fireplace, Clotilde was able to recognise her visitor.

"Why, Agnes, Agnes Twitchell," she cried, "what brings you here?"

Agnes Twitchell it was, clad only in her night-

gown with a shawl wrapped about her, with her hair flying and her teeth chattering.

"I — I came to tell you," she began, and then broke off into wild and joyful weeping. "God forgive me for all the wrong I have done you, Mistress Radpath," she cried, "there — there is a ship coming in!"

If she had more words to say, she could not speak them, for at that she broke down utterly and clung to Clotilde, trembling and sobbing aloud. Clotilde half carried her to the settle, blew up the fire and brought a warm cloak to wrap about her. A startled servant came down the stairs and was sent for hot water and restoratives. Whenever Clotilde even so much as looked toward the door, Agnes screamed and wept afresh.

"Do not leave me," she begged. "It might not be true! I might have dreamed it."

Clotilde felt that it would indeed be cruel to leave the girl in the midst of such hysterical terror. Only once, when she ran upstairs for more warm blankets, did she dare to stop for a moment at the small round window and look out. There through the dark, she saw the ship speeding up the harbour like a half-seen phantom, its close-reefed sails showing like pale ghosts against the headland. It might indeed have been a vision or a dream.

It seemed a long, long time before Agnes was quieted. At last, however, her tense fingers relaxed, her tears ceased flowing and she leaned back in the great chair.

"Yes," she said, reading the longing in Clotilde's eyes, "go you and see if it is really so, Mistress

"WHY ARE YOU NOT WATCHING, MOTHER?"

Radpath. I could never bear to ask the truth myself."

Without waiting for further words, Clotilde snatched up a cloak and sped out into the dark, windy garden. She stumbled and slipped many times on the wet stones of the path, but at last reached the white gate and leaned over it. Up the lane from the harbour was coming a crowd of shouting people; they carried torches that tossed and flamed high in the wind. The clamour and confusion were so great, the light was so flickering and uncertain that it was not until they came near that she could make out what it was that they bore in their midst. But at last she saw; it was her husband lifted high among them, Gerald Radpath carried in triumph on the shoulders of the shouting men of Hopewell. The *Mistress Margeret* had safely sailed the long sea road to China and back again.

They came close to where she stood and, still cheering, set their burden down. When they saw Clotilde waiting, there fell a silence so complete that the familiar creaking of the hinges could be heard as Gerald opened the gate. The foremost of the crowd looked once at her white face and spoke below his breath to his companions.

" Come away, lads," he said. " We have no right within there now."

Not that night nor the next day could Clotilde hear the tale of Gerald's adventures for oh, what need he had of resting and being tended, how pale and utterly worn out he was! But at last he told the story, sitting under the linden tree in the warm brightness of a perfect Indian summer afternoon.

He told how they had met storms, had been delayed by calms and had narrowly escaped being wrecked a hundred times on account of their ignorance of the proper course, but had at last come in safety to the East India Islands and to the great sea-ports of China.

"I can spend all of my declining years in telling you of the wonders we saw," he said, "so I will not stop in my tale now or I would never come to the end."

He related further how, on their homeward voyage, they had put in for shelter behind a little island and how two of the men, against his orders had slipped ashore to trade with the natives. When they had set forth again these two sickened with a tropical fever that spread, one by one, to all on board. There were no men to tend the sails for all lay ill, only one had strength to hold the tiller and keep the vessel from destruction, and that one was himself.

"The wind held steady," he said, "and when I could no longer stand, I lay upon the deck, clinging still to the tiller and wondering whether we should ever come to port. The sky seemed red-hot above us and the water red-hot below, and at last I saw neither sea nor sail nor compass, nor knew whither I was steering. I saw only a cool, green garden with a linden tree and a sundial in its midst, I saw the white flowers nodding in the wind and I vow that I could smell the verbena and mignonette and hear the gurgle of the brook that runs beside the road. And I saw you come down the path, it was straight

to you that the *Mistress Margeret* steered her course, for I had knowledge of nothing else."

It was Joseph Twitchell, the first to recover from the fever, who finally came to his aid and carried him down to his berth where he lay delirious for days and talked of nothing but the bees among the apple blossoms and the wind stirring the poplar trees. But finally, white, thin and weak and needing the help of two companions, he had crawled up on deck once more to enjoy the cool, fresh evening air. The hot tropical wind had fallen, the Southern Cross that had shone so long in the sky above them had dropped below the horizon and the friendly Northern stars hung serene and clear in the heavens to show them the safe way home.

Gerald was still speaking when the white gate creaked as it opened to admit a visitor. Many and many a person of high and low degree had come and gone that way, but this man was, perhaps, the one whose coming meant the most of all. Yet he was only a common sailor, dressed in rough clothes, who shuffled his feet upon the path and fumbled with his battered hat.

"Please, sir," he said to Gerald, "I came to ask if, when you sail for China again, you will take me with you."

"But you did not wish to go before," Gerald answered.

"Ay, that I know," replied the sailor, "and I curse my folly now and would give both my eyes to have been among your crew. For the news of your safe return is running like wildfire through the

country, it will be all over New England in another day, while here in Hopewell there are already a hundred seafaring men ready for a new voyage. And as for the merchants, there is not one within fifty miles, which is as far as the tale has gone as yet, but is looking through his stock and setting aside the goods that he is going to venture in the new East India trade."

"But there is only one ship that has gone and come back again," said Gerald. "Has that been sufficient to convince you all?"

"It is enough," returned the man; "that has convinced us along with an old saying that, they tell us, was first current in Master Simon's time and has now begun to go round again. It is that 'Wherever a Radpath goes, there it is no bad thing to follow!'"

CONCLUSION

It is many and many a long year now since Gerald and Clotilde walked together down the high-hedged paths, but Master Simon's garden still blooms green and fair upon the hillside. Ships coming past the rocky headlands of the harbour steer, by night, for the light streaming from that little round window of the great brick mansion, for that is an older landmark than the tall white lighthouse near the entrance of the bay. They are not now the mighty East India merchantmen that luff and tack in the narrow channel, for they, with their tall masts and towering white sails have vanished from the seas forever. Along the shore, nevertheless, you can still see the endless wharves and great, empty warehouses clinging to their rotting piles and almost slipping into the lazy, lapping tide. They manage, somehow, still to stand and tell all people who go by how great was once the trade that brought prosperity back to Hopewell. If you peep within you will see only bare, vacant floors and a long dusty sunbeam or two, dropping from rifts in the sagging roof, but you will sniff a vague scent of fruit and spices as a reminder of the days of the clipper ships of Hopewell, laden with the world's goods and following Gerald Radpath's long sea-road to China.

Although those wharves are idle and the ware-

houses empty, you need not think, however, that the products of America stop at home. No, they are carried by different ships, swift steel vessels that drop long trails of smoke behind them as they speed upon their way, they go out through different harbours, but, just the same, New England goods and New England men find their way to the very ends of the world.

The hum of the spinning-wheel and the creak of the loom that once you could hear in the warm noontide, through the open cottage doors, has increased now a thousand-fold, for rows of great brick factories crown the hill and, far out to sea, the fishermen can see, hanging over Hopewell, the cloud of smoke from hundreds of spouting chimneys. The tiny log hut where Goody Parsons planted her rose, the cottage where Samuel Skerry plied his trade, even the house with its white-painted doorway where Miles Atherton used to live, have all vanished to make room for newer, greater buildings. The little meeting house still stands, but is overshadowed by a great stone church, where a huge organ has taken the place of the droning psalm-singing, and where the pastor has now neither time nor need for planting potato fields to eke out his living. Yet amid all the stately buildings about it, schools, library, church and Court House, the old grey log house is the most precious of all, for it stands as a monument to the brave men who reared it and who carried their love of freedom into a new world.

At the bend in the stream where the little Jesuit priest had built his woodland chapel and decked his

altar, there is now a busy humming factory town, called by his name and driving its noisy spinning-wheels by means of the river that once babbled past his door. Rows of toiling men and women can look out through their tall windows down upon the grave of Jeremiah Macrae where the Indians set up a rough white stone at the bidding of their dearly loved French father.

In the midst of all this change and growth and bustle of new business, Master Simon's garden is still untouched. The roses and lilies, the pink peonies and white hollyhocks, bloom on, undisturbed, year after year. The great house of mellow brick, covered now with vines to the very roof, looks out over the sea, unchanged. In the garden, romping down the paths and tumbling on the grass, play Master Simon's children to a far generation. For but a few years, it seems, they frolic there among the flowers and then, grown to men and women, they set off to do their share of the world's labour. And there, in June, when the linden tree blooms and the bees hum loud in the branches, they sit upon the bench in the Queen's Garden and hear the story of Master Simon. Over and over, the tale is told, by mother to daughter, by father to son, a long, long story now, for it reaches back to the times of great Queen Elizabeth, and it will go forward, who can tell how far. Each generation has something new to add, some record of danger faced, of hardship endured, of work well done for the good of all. And they who hear it, those growing boys and girls, store it away as a memory to serve in time of need, so that, when the time comes, they may do their part

in the labour of the world, that they may take up Master Simon's work and bear it a little further, that they may build higher and yet higher the roofs of gold.

THE END

Printed in the United States of America